



AS-00300CL
48
C.S.L.

SKETCHES OF RULERS OF INDIA

VOL. III
THE GOVERNORS-GENERAL AND DUPLEIX

MARQUESS CORNWALLIS · MARQUESS WELLESLEY
MARQUESS OF HASTINGS · EARL AMHERST
LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK · EARL OF AUCKLAND
VISCOUNT HARDINGE
DUPEIX

BY
G. D. OSWELL

M.A. OXON.
PRINCIPAL OF RAJKUMAR COLLEGE, RAIPUR, CENTRAL PROVINCES, INDIA

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1908



CSL

Rare
IND
954.08
OSW-S
V.3

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO, AND MELBOURNE

954.

~~954.08~~ OSW N S
V.3

27920



INTRODUCTION

WITH Pitt's India Bill of 1784, a radical change took place in the relations of the Company to its Indian possessions, and from this time onward through the long line of Governors-General the supreme management of Indian affairs, as Sir John Seeley has stated, passed out of the hands of the Company. 'Thenceforward an enterprise, begun for purposes of trade, fell under the management of men who had no concern with trade. Thenceforward two English statesmen divided between themselves the decision of the leading Indian questions—the President of the Board of Control and the Governor-General: and as long as the Company lasted the leading position belonged rather to the Governor-General than to the President of the Board.' With this change in the control of Indian affairs came also a change in the selection of the men who were to have the supreme control of affairs in India. Henceforth the Rulers of India, as a general rule, were chosen from the ranks of the aristocracy of England: and no class could have been more welcome in India, for nowhere in the world is the prevailing sentiment more aristocratic in its character than in India, where the personal rule of the Chief has always recommended itself to the genius of the people. Herein may be found one factor in the success of England's rule in the East. It is not without significance that the long line of Governors-General of India should have begun with Lord Cornwallis, who did so much in creating a landed aristocracy in the Provinces he was called upon to rule, and should have ended with Lord Canning, who not only established the



INTRODUCTION

CSL

aristocracy of the greater India of his day in their ancient rights and privileges, but after their stanch loyalty had stood the strain of the test it was put to during the great crisis of 1857, even gave them additional privileges that no former Governments had ever granted them. It is indeed fitting that in the year of the Jubilee of the Proclamation of the great Queen, whereby they were granted this token of trust, still further privileges should be in contemplation for the aristocracy of India, and that they should be called upon to take a still more important place than they have hitherto taken in the Councils of the Empire.

In his biography of Lord Cornwallis, Mr. Seton-Karr has stated that Mill, while admitting the generous policy of the Permanent Settlement, declares that it was dictated in some measure by prejudice, and attributes to Cornwallis, himself an aristocrat, the intention of establishing an aristocracy on the European model. Mr. Seton-Karr's comment on this is a sound one: 'Lord Cornwallis' aristocratical prejudices—if they be so considered—were really just what suited his position and aims. It may be truly said that they cannot be cast aside by any statesman who thoroughly comprehends the peoples whom he has to govern and the problems which he ought to solve. There is nothing democratic in the various strata of Indian society. From its earliest traditions to its recent history it has been the sanctuary of privilege. Its tribes worship pomp and pageantry, and are reconciled to an apparent inequality over which every man of talent and capacity hopes to triumph. It may be taken as an axiom that the general sense of the Natives is in favour of marked gradations of rank, and of exemption from restraints and restrictions, while at the same time a value is set upon impartial justice, inviolate good-faith and incorruptible integrity. Guilds and fraternities, associations of traders, community of interests between co-parcenary communities

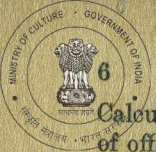


INTRODUCTION

5
GL

are not democratic, but, if anything, oligarchical : and caste in all its endless ramifications is a symbol of honour and not a badge of disgrace.' These words are as true now as when they were penned, and though something may be said of the democratic tendencies of some, but by no means all, of the new great Middle Class that has arisen in India, their ideas have not penetrated far among the masses of the peoples of India. The aristocracy of India still wield an enormous influence, and the great masses of the peoples of India still will to have it so. Pertinently, therefore, does a writer in a recent number of *The Spectator* remark : ' Surely no one could desire more in the name of sympathy or of democracy than that people should be governed in accordance with their own prepossessions.'

India has been fortunate in the men who have been deputed by England to be its Rulers. The great muster-roll of Governors-General is a long and distinguished one. First in the roll comes Warren Hastings, who was Governor-General for the long period of eleven years, and who has been described as ' the administrative organizer, as Clive had been the territorial founder, of our Indian Empire '. His career has been sufficiently dealt with in the earlier volume of this series that deals with the Company's Governors. It was during his régime that the Company came to the momentous decision that other than Company's servants should be placed in supreme control of affairs in India, a decision which did more than almost anything else to establish British rule in India ' broad-based upon the people's will '. And from his time onward, with the exception of Sir John Shore, who was indeed afterwards created a peer, all Governors-General were chosen from the highest ranks of England's nobility. There was a short interregnum of some twenty months after Warren Hastings, when Sir John Macpherson, a civil servant of the Company, acted as Governor-General. The Directors had wished to appoint Lord Macartney. He was visiting



INTRODUCTION

CSL

Calcutta towards the end of Warren Hastings's period of office, and they had actually already sent him a dispatch designating him Governor-General, but sudden illness necessitated his return to England. Sir John Kaye has given the cause of that illness, which is worth quoting here. The Company had been recently promulgating certain sumptuary regulations for the guidance of their young civil servants. Amongst these was one directed against the practice, common among them, of carrying umbrellas. With that strict scrupulosity that characterized Lord Macartney, he had been carrying out this regulation in his own person by way of setting a good example: the result was that he got a touch of the sun while walking about Calcutta without an umbrella, and had to be invalided home in consequence.

The interregnum came to an end with the appointment of the first Marquess of Cornwallis, who was the earliest of the new dynasty of Parliamentary Governors-General. 'In him,' it has been said, 'was seen for the first time in India a representative of England clothed with all the attributes of genuine rulership.' Sir Alfred Lyall has revealed the secret of Lord Cornwallis's administration, when he states that from his time the history of British rule in India is a history of a civil and a military service unparalleled in the history of the world for devotion to duty and self-sacrifice. Sir John Kaye, indeed, has gone so far as to say that without the work done by Cornwallis it would have been impossible for him to write such a work as his *Lives of Indian Officers*. After Lord Cornwallis came Sir John Shore, who became Baron Teignmouth. As a civilian he had been an authority in everything relating to land administration, and a worthy forerunner of such men as Bird, Thomason, Munro, Elliott, and Ibbetson, to mention only a few of the men who have at different times in the history of British rule distinguished themselves in the difficult domain of the settle-



INTRODUCTION

SL

ment of the land revenue in India. As Governor-General his rule was uneventful, though pregnant with future trouble. After Shore there was again a short interregnum, during which Sir Alured Clarke held office. Then came the great Marquess Wellesley, who was the first to see what the true mission of England in the East was, and, having seen, to give effect, as far as in him lay, to his belief that 'the sovereignty of England could alone give India what she wanted—firm rule, freedom from tyranny and corruption, expansion and liberty'.

Then for a short space came Rulers, sent out by their masters at home, who still continued to blind their eyes to the destiny of their country, and to deny to her her manifest mission as a maker of Empires. They vainly thought that they could stem the tide of England's progress in the East, and that it was in their power to decree: 'So far shalt thou go and no farther.' This was the period of Lord Cornwallis's brief second term of office, and that of his temporary successor, Sir George Barlow, who, being only a *locum tenens*, contented himself with marking time. Then followed Lord Minto, of whom Sir W. W. Hunter has well said: 'The Company had ordered him to follow a policy of non-intervention, and he managed to obey the instructions without injuring the prestige of the British name.' Lord Minto had the prescience to see that the maxims of the counter could not prevail if the Company were to remain in India even as a commercial power, let alone as a sovereign power; and though he loyally carried out the policy enjoined on him, and though he did much to strengthen the British position in India by the alliances he made with Asiatic and Indian potentates, and thus to checkmate the ambitious designs of France, still it was not in his power to prevent the inevitable consequences of such a policy. An historian has thus written of the policy of non-intervention as inaugurated by the Company in 1805: 'The policy of



INTRODUCTION

CSL

1805 had the effect of allowing the whole of Hindustan, beyond its own boundaries, to become a scene of fearful strife, lawless plunder, and frightful desolation for many succeeding years, until the same horrors invaded its own sacred precincts, and involved it in expensive and perilous warfare, the result of which was its being obliged to assume what it had so long mischievously declined, the avowed supremacy over all the States and Princes of Hindustan.'

It fell to the lot of the Marquess of Hastings, after his arrival in India, to again initiate a policy which at an earlier date in his career he had expressly repudiated, a policy of intervention and annexation, and to reverse the disastrous policy of non-intervention, and thus to start the country once more on its inevitable career of expansion and empire. Only, however, after an expensive and protracted campaign was the Indian Government replaced in the position in which it had been left by his great forerunner, the Marquess Wellesley. From this time forward, with short intervals only of peace, the country was committed, by the force of inevitable circumstances, to that policy of conquest and annexation which had its consummation under the rule of the Marquess of Dalhousie, and ended in the acquisition by England of its present supreme position in India. In this connexion, Sir John Seeley, in his *Expansion of England*, has written: 'If we were to trace the history of the East India Company from year to year, carefully putting ourselves at the point of view of the Directors, we should be doing all in our power to blind ourselves. For it has not been the will of the Directors, but other forces over-ruling their will, forces against which they struggled in vain, by which the Indian Empire has been brought into existence.' After the Marquess of Hastings, there was again a short interregnum, during which Mr. Adam, one of the ablest of Indian Civil Servants, held office. He did much to



INTRODUCTION

9
SL

Further the new and enlightened policy that had recently been inaugurated in the domain of education.

Earl Amherst was the next Governor-General. The principal feature of his rule was the extension of the British dominions towards the North-East, and the removal of the political danger in Hindustan which arose from the prevalent idea that the great Jat fortress of Bhartpur was impregnable even to British arms and valour. After him there was a short interregnum, when Mr. William Butterworth Bayley, another able civilian, whose family claims connexion with Clive, held office, pending the arrival of Lord William Bentinck. The rule of this great Governor-General, as Sir W. W. Hunter has well said, 'forms an epoch in administrative reform, and in the slow process by which a subject population is won over to venerate as well as to obey its foreign Rulers.' Bentinck was followed for a short space by Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe, one of the most distinguished members of the Civil Service. He held office only temporarily, but he was not a man merely to mark time, and his period of office, short as it was, marked an epoch in the history of British administration in India. He will always be remembered in India as the Liberator of the Indian Press. In the second volume of this series of sketches, in which the writer has dealt with the careers of the Governors of Provinces under the Company, he has shown how, when convinced that certain reforms were absolutely necessary, these men proceeded on their own initiative to inaugurate them. Metcalfe resolved that the emancipation of the Press was a righteous act, and he promptly translated his resolve into fact. In the same spirit, another high-minded civilian, and a contemporary of Metcalfe, Mr Alexander Ross, when holding temporarily the office of Governor of Agra, abolished the transit dues that were strangling the trade of his vast Province, a step which led to the eventual abolition of similar dues in Bengal. Mr.



INTRODUCTION

CSL

Ross was a man who, as his private and official correspondence abundantly shows, was worthy of a place among those distinguished civil and military servants whom Sir John Kaye has immortalized in his great work.

‘With the succession to power of the Earl of Auckland,’ writes Sir Alfred Lyall, ‘the curtain was just rising upon the first act of the long drama, not yet in our own time played out, of Central Asian politics. What did this new departure imply? Not that we had any quarrel with the Afghans, from whom we were separated by the five rivers whose floods unite in the Indus. It meant that after half a century’s respite, the English were again coming into contact with a rival European influence on Asiatic ground, and that whereas in the previous century they had only to fear such rivalry on the sea-coast, they now had due notice of its approach overland from beyond the Oxus and the Paropamisus.’ Hence it was that from this time commenced a new era of war and conquest, which lasted practically for a period of twenty years, indeed down to the Mutiny of 1857. Thus Sir John Seeley has written: ‘A new and stormy era begins at this moment in our Indian history, and it may all be traced in the main to the new alarm caused by Russia.’ The Earl of Ellenborough followed Lord Auckland, but he was soon recalled by the Court of Directors who, says Sir W. W. Hunter, ‘differed from him on points of administration, and distrusted his erratic genius.’ Viscount Hardinge was the next Governor-General. He was an able general as well as an able administrator, and he saw his country safely through that first great trial of strength with the Sikh power. He then made way for the Marquess of Dalhousie, who, in the language of Sir Alfred Lyall, ‘annexed the Punjab to the British Crown, carried our territorial frontier across the Indus right up to the base of the Afghan hills, finally extinguished the long rivalry



INTRODUCTION

SL

of the Native Indian powers, and absorbed under one sovereignty the last kingdom that remained outside the pale of British rule in India.' With Lord Canning, the last of the distinguished roll of Governors-General, and the first of an equally distinguished roll of Viceroys, came the transfer of the dominions of the Company to the Crown. Thus was brought about the complete supremacy of Great Britain over the vast Indian Continent.

If in this long roll of Governors-General there were three who are entitled to be called great legislators, Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis, and Lord William Bentinck, so also there were three who, with Clive, are entitled to be styled great conquerors, the Marquess Wellesley, the Marquess of Hastings, and the Marquess Dalhousie. 'Clive had established us along the East Coast from Calcutta to Madras; Wellesley and Hastings overthrew the Mahratta power and established us as lords of the middle of the country, and of the Western side of the Peninsula, and Dalhousie, besides consolidating these conquests, gave us the North-West, and carried our frontier to the Indus.' Of the great Oriental Empire thus created Sir John Seeley has finely said: 'An Empire similar to that of Rome, in which we hold the position not merely of a ruling, but of an educating and civilizing race; this Empire held at arm's length, paying no tribute to us, yet costing nothing except the burden it imposes on our foreign policy, and neither modifying nor perceptibly influencing our busy domestic politics; this Empire nevertheless held firmly, and with a grasp that does not slacken, but visibly tightens, the union between England and India, ill-assorted and unnatural as it might seem to be, nevertheless growing closer and closer with great rapidity, under the influence of the modern conditions of the world which seem favourable to vast political unions; all this makes up the strangest, most curious, and perhaps most instructive chapter of English history.' To the



INTRODUCTION

CSL

Governors-General must the credit of this great achievement, the dominion of England over India, be assigned.

There have been many judgements, sound and unsound, passed on the methods by which this dominion has been achieved. The conception was undoubtedly due to the master-mind of the Marquess Wellesley. Some historians, indeed, have thought they traced a compact between Wellesley and Pitt to replace the American Colonies by an Eastern Empire; whereas the only point of contact between these two great patriots was their far-seeing patriotism and their single-minded devotion to their country's interests. The expansion of England was dear to them both, and in French ambition they both saw a bar placed before that expansion; and both were agreed that French ascendancy, whether in America or in Asia, was to be crushed once and for all. In America the outcome of this determination was the acquisition of Canada: in Asia, that of India. Similarly, another eminent historian has considered it necessary to pen an Apologia for the policy of the Governors-General in these terms: 'It was not to be denied that a most deplorable anarchy reigned in India. Now this anarchy rose directly out of the decline of the authority of the Great Mogul. It was possible, of course, for the English to wash their hands of this, to defend their own territories and let the chaos welter as it would outside their frontier. But to Governors-General on the spot such a course might easily seem not just but simply cruel. Aggrandizement might present itself in the light of a simple duty, when it seemed that by extending our Empire the reign of robbery and murder might be brought to an end in a moment and that of law commence.' The lives and careers of the distinguished men who have ruled India in the capacity of Governors-General under the Company are, however, a sufficient guarantee that aggrandizement had no place in their policy. So far as their own country was concerned, the



INTRODUCTION

13
SL

only springs of action that moved them were Duty and Patriotism. While, as regards the people of the country they had been deputed to rule, the only considerations that actuated them were justice, righteousness, and humanity. Anarchy they saw all around them, and it was their duty as well as their pleasure to put an end to it.

If any one is in doubt whether this policy was justified he has only to read what an historian has written of the state of things that the English found existing in India, to be assured that it was more than justified, that indeed it was a policy from which no Englishman, worthy of his great inheritance, could possibly have turned away in indifference without forfeiting his birthright. 'When' (writes an historian) 'we began to take possession of the country, it was already in a state of wild anarchy such as Europe has perhaps never known. What Government it had was pretty invariably despotic, and was generally in the hands of military adventurers, depending on a soldiery composed of bandits whose whole vocation was plunder. The Mahratta power covered the greater part of India, and threatened at once Delhi and Calcutta, while it had its head quarters at Puna: and yet this power was but an organization of pillage. Meanwhile, in the North, Nadir Shah rivalled Attila or Tamerlane in his devastating expeditions. It may be said that this was only a passing anarchy produced by the dissolution of the Mogul Empire. Even so, it would show that India is not a country which can endure the withdrawal of Government. But have we not a somewhat exaggerated idea of the Mogul Empire? Its greatness was extremely shortlived, and in the Deccan it seems never to have established itself. The anarchy which Clive and Hastings found in India was not so exceptional a state of things as it might seem. Probably it was much more intense than ever before, but a condition of anarchy seems to have been almost chronic in India since Mahmoud, and to have been but suspended for



INTRODUCTION

CSL

a while in the Northern half by Akbar and Shah Jahan. It was from this chronic anarchy that the Governors-General delivered India. And who is prepared to deny that such a state of things would again arise in India with the withdrawal from the scene of British rule? Well does Sir John Seeley say: 'To withdraw our Government from a country which is dependent on it, and which we have made incapable of depending upon anything else, would be the most inexcusable of all conceivable crimes and might possibly cause the most stupendous of all conceivable calamities.' Similarly, the words of Viscount Morley are well worthy of attention: 'The people of this country were the Rulers of India. We had a present duty which we could not neglect. How should we look in the face of the civilized world if we turned our back upon our duty and our task? How should we bear the stings of our own conscience when, as assuredly we should by and by, we heard through the dark distance the roar and storm of confusion and carnage through India. The final outcome of British rule in India might be a profitable topic of musing to a meditative mind, but we were not there to muse. Our first and commanding task was to keep order and to quell violence between races and creeds and sternly to insist upon the impartial application of rules of justice.'

If the Marquess Wellesley conceived the idea of the dominion of England in India, it was the Marquess of Dalhousie who finally consummated that dominion. An historian has said of this great Proconsul, somewhat unjustly, 'Lord Dalhousie stands out in history as a Ruler of the type of Frederic the Great, and did deeds which are almost as difficult to justify as the seizure of Silesia or the partition of Poland.' That is hardly the estimate which a biographer who has had access to his correspondence, private and official, would form of that great statesman, whose work of consolidation did more than anything else



INTRODUCTION

15
SL

to help England to maintain her supremacy in India when the inevitable trial of strength came between the forces making for order and those making for disorder. The final scene came as the result of the great struggle of 1857. Sir Alfred Lyall has thus described it: 'In suppressing the wild fanatic outbreak of 1857, we were compelled to sweep away the last shadows, that had long lost substance, of names and figures once illustrious and formidable in India. The phantom of a Mogul Emperor and his Court vanished from Delhi: the last Pretender to the honours of the Mahratta Peshwa disappeared from Cawnpur; the direct Government of all our Indian territories passed from the Company to the Crown in 1858.' The passing of the Company, and the accession to the Empire of India of the Sovereign of England, was duly proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of India. One of the leading newspapers of the day thus commented on the Royal Proclamation issued by the Great Queen: 'The Imperial Caesars of Rome's proudest era could not have boasted a more comprehensive designation than that which is embraced in the high-sounding words: "Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the Colonies and Dependencies thereof in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australasia," with which the Proclamation issued to the people of India commences. Such a preamble—it is the only Orientalism in the whole composition—must have struck with effect on the ears of the assembled multitudes.' Passing from some general considerations on the tenor of the Proclamation, the article thus concludes: 'For good or for evil the last experiment which this country is likely to be able to make in reference to the complete incorporation of India into our rule has now been solemnly inaugurated. To time, and the wisdom or weakness, as the case may be, of those who are entrusted with its development, must the event be committed. For the present we can only hope that the



INTRODUCTION

CSL

duties of this great mission may be faithfully discharged, and that truth and justice, peace and happiness may be its issue.'

Fifty years have passed since these noble words were penned; and if the final outcome of British rule in India appears, in this year of grace, 1908, to be unrest and discontent, at any rate with a section of the population, be it 'mere froth or deep rolling surge', other causes will have to be sought for it than the quality of British rule, and the character of the exponents of that rule: for those to whom the great task of ruling India during these fifty years has been entrusted have most faithfully discharged their duties, and have striven their utmost that truth and justice, peace and happiness, should prevail throughout the great Oriental Empire of England's benign sovereign. It is more the province of the historian than that of the biographer to deal with the causation of phenomena which properly belong to the domain of history or politics: but no writer on Indian affairs can afford to pass by, without some comment, this present phase, a passing phase it may be hoped, in India, more especially at a time when every newspaper in the land has its headings in large type, 'The Unrest in India;' and when the 'man in the street' is continually accosting every Anglo-Indian who may be supposed to know something about the matter, with the question, 'What will be the outcome of it?' and when even the intelligent artisan, with his practical view of things, so pertinently exclaims: 'They have a toughish job of it out there just now!' The writer proposes to deal with the subject more or less from an historical standpoint with a view to discover whether, given certain causes in the past which produced certain results, some similar causes may not be found in the present day producing similar results, so far, at any rate, as one phase of the present unrest is concerned. That it has more than one phase all writers acknowledge, and no one cause can be given as the prime moving factor. Educa-



INTRODUCTION

17
SL

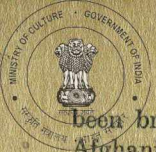
tion has been assigned as the leading cause : but even here there are different points of view. Thus one recent writer finds in our systems of education the principal cause ; on the other hand, Lord Morley finds the moving cause in the subjects taught. He has said : ' Much of the movement arose from the fact that there was a large body of educated Indians who had been fed upon the great teachers and masters of this country—Milton, Burke, Macaulay, John Stuart Mill—and they were intoxicated with the ideas of freedom, nationality, and self-government, which these great writers promulgated.' The opinions of a statesman, who is also a philosopher and an historian, must be regarded with the greatest deference. In education undoubtedly, whether the subjects taught or the systems pursued be considered, must be found one factor in the present movement, just as it was, though in a different way, in the earlier movements. And as the system of English education in India has proceeded on the lines of criticism, rather than of history, and has succeeded in developing the critical faculty, which has never been wanting, instead of creating the historical faculty, which has always been lacking in the mental equipment of the Indian, it is not surprising that this should be so. But there is another way in which education may have been indirectly a cause or at least one phase of this unrest, and it is that which the writer proposes to deal with in this sketch especially. He does not propose to consider the matter from the ordinary point of view, having regard to the effects of the subjects taught or the systems employed on the receptive mind of the Indian student, but in regard to the effect of the education policy generally on the attitude of the still powerful Brahman hierarchy towards the Government.

Sir John Seeley has stated that ' a common religion is one leading element of nationality ', and he proceeds to show that this element is not altogether wanting in India :

INTRODUCTION

CSL

his words on this subject are "worth quoting here, as they will serve to illustrate one point in the writer's argument : 'The Brahmanical system extends over the whole of India, not, of course, that it is the only religion of India. There are not less than fifty millions of Muhammadans. There is also a small number of Sikhs, who profess a religion which is a sort of fusion of Muhammadanism and Brahmanism : there are a few Christians, and in Ceylon and Nipal there are Buddhists. But Brahmanism remains the creed of the enormous majority, and it has so much real vitality that it has more than once resisted formidable attacks. One of the most powerful of all proselytizing creeds, Buddhism, sprang up in India itself : it spread far and wide : we have evidence that it flourished in India two centuries before Christ, and that it was still flourishing in the seventh century after Christ. Yet it has been conquered by Brahmanism, and flourishes now in almost every part of Asia more than in the country that has produced it. After this victory Brahmanism had to resist the assault of another powerful aggressive religion, before which Zoroastrianism had already fallen, and even Christianity had in the East been compelled to retreat some steps—Muhammadanism. Here again it held its own : Mussulman Governments overspread India, but they could not convert the people.' Thus it will be seen that Brahmanism has had a great past : as a religious organization it has been supreme : and only the force of circumstance prevented it from being supreme as a political organization, for it must not be forgotten that the Mahratta Confederacy, the only indigenous power that has ever attained to any great political ascendancy in India, under the guidance of its founder, Sivaji, who was the first to found a political organization on a religious basis, was controlled by the Brahman Caste. There was a moment in its history, moreover, when it seemed on the point of uniting all India under its sway, had not its power



INTRODUCTION

19
SL

been broken by the descent of Ahmad Shah Abdali from Afghanistan, and the fatal battle of Panipat. Would it be any cause for wonder then if the Brahman hierarchy thought the time ripe for another revival of their religious supremacy in India, as one step, it may be, towards the attainment of a political supremacy? It is not an insignificant fact that an attempt should have been recently made in more than one important Native State on the West of India, where this hierarchy has its head quarters, on the part of the Brahmans, to obtain the control of all official patronage. Then again there are not wanting signs that the recent great revival of the outward forms of religion in all parts of the country is due to the initiative of this powerful organization. This revival has been manifested in a variety of ways: amongst these may be mentioned the re-opening and re-furbishing of many an ancient temple that had long fallen into disuse. Yet another significant feature has been the great movement of the mendicant religious orders all over the country. Their extensive and picturesque camps, with the quaint admixture of the products of Western civilization with Oriental symbolism, the handsome umbrella tents which would not have done despite to an English lawn, with the ochre-painted and dust-besmeared figures seated beneath them, have been a conspicuous feature in the neighbourhood of the most important towns within recent years. Here these mendicants have located themselves for long periods of time, and have been holding receptions of all classes upon an unprecedented scale. A distinguished administrator, Sir Frederick Lely, who was an acute observer of men and things when in India, once observed to the writer: 'The movement which appears to you to indicate a revival of religion is in reality national in its main character.' It would appear to be a combination of both.

The history of Brahmanism in its contact with the West is curious and instructive. So long as English Rulers



INTRODUCTION

CSL

were content, as for long they were, to have no outward signs in India that they possessed a religion of their own, so long was the Brahman hierarchy content to remain quiescent. This early period of British rule, on account of the tendency on the part of the new Rulers of India to conceal the fact that they possessed any religion of their own, has indeed been called by one historian the Brahmanic period. Sir John Seeley has well described this aspect of early British rule in India : ' We could not fail to see the enormous differences between our civilization and that of India : we could not fail on the whole greatly to prefer our own. But had we any right to impose our views upon the natives ? We had our own Christianity, our own views of philosophy, of history, and of science : but were we not bound by a sort of tacit contract with the natives to hold all these things officially in abeyance ? This was the view that was taken at first. It was not admitted that England was to play the part of Rome to her Empire ; no, she was to put her civilization on one side and govern according to Indian ideas. This view was the more winning as the new and mysterious world of Sanskrit learning was revealing itself to these first generations of Anglo-Indians. They were under the charm of a remote philosophy and a fantastic history. They were, as it was said, Brahmanized, and would not hear of admitting into their enchanted Oriental enclosure either the Christianity or any of the learning of the West.' Could the toleration of the ancient systems around them and in their midst go farther than it did in those early days of British rule, when even troops paraded to do honour to the Deities of India on the occasion of great Hindu festivals ? This entirely suited the Brahman hierarchy. The material progress of the British aroused no jealousy. But a change came in the year 1813, the first year of the rule of the Marquess of Hastings. In that year, as the historian of the period has shown, what has been called the Brahmanical period of British

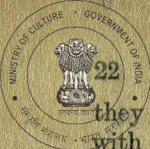


INTRODUCTION

GL
21

rule came to an end, and England prepared to pour the civilization, Christianity, and science of the West into India. The Brahman hierarchy saw in this new movement a blow struck at the moral ascendancy which they had so long and so successfully exercised over the minds and imaginations of so many millions in India. Now they saw cause for jealousy. And it is significant in treating of the causation of political phenomena, that within a short three years from this time came the great trial of strength between the Mahratta Confederacy, shorn though it was of much of its original strength, and the British, which ended in the complete collapse of the Mahratta power. And it is also not without significance that the only community that strove to upset the new order of things in Western India should have been the Brahman hierarchy.

And so the time went on : and England proceeded on her peaceful task of civilization, but still without much care or regard for the education of the people committed to her charge, for, though the decision had been come to in 1813 that a sum of money should be appropriated to the revival of learning, and the introduction of useful arts and sciences, practically nothing was done till more than twenty years had passed. And again the Brahman hierarchy were content to remain quiescent. But in 1835 came the momentous decision that the English language was to be the medium of all higher education in India, instead of their own ancient and revered Sanskrit. In this decision the Brahman hierarchy saw another blow struck at their moral ascendancy. Their jealousy was again aroused. And when the famous dispatch of 1854 showed them that the decision was final and irrevocable, they began to realize that the knell of their ancient ascendancy had been sounded, for they recognized that henceforth the ascendancy of the British would be no longer merely a material one, such as they had been content to acquiesce in, but a moral one, as with English literature



INTRODUCTION

CSL

they saw that the youth of India would imbibe the morality with which that literature is permeated. An illustration in proof of this has been given in the Press of the day, which recorded the intense excitement that prevailed amongst the Brahman community when two Brahman youths first entered the portals of a British institution in Bombay to study English literature. Here again it is not without significance in a study of causation and effect, that, within the short space of three years after the promulgation of the new edict on education, the Mutiny of the Sepoy Army, composed so largely of Brahmans as it was, should have broken out. Some may see a flaw in the argument at this point from the curious fact that this event appeared to be the revolt of a Hindu Army striking for the restoration of a Muhammadan Empire. But who can doubt that, had events proceeded as the Brahmans had hoped, the Muhammadan régime at Delhi would speedily have been swept aside to make way for a new Mahratta Confederacy under such a Mahratta Peshwa as had already declared himself on the other side of India.

The Brahman hierarchy have ever been distinguished for the skill and subtlety with which they can discover, and engineer to suit their own ends, any prevailing feelings of disquietude in any of the great communities which go to make up the population of India. It matters not to them whether the causes at work are religious, social, or political. In 1857 they discovered, amongst other factors likely to cause a certain amount of restlessness, elements of religious disquiet, especially in the ranks of the Brahman Sepoys, caused by a mistaken confidence on the part of the military authorities in the harmlessness of some recent military regulations and innovations. These they engineered to the utmost, and they raised the cry, a religious one, 'Your religion is in danger.' This cry deceived the Sepoy, but not, fortunately, the great bulk of the people, who had long learnt to appreciate the policy of religious



INTRODUCTION

23
SL

neutrality adopted by their Rulers. In this connexion there is a significant passage in the comments of one of the leading English newspapers of the day on that section of the Royal Proclamation which dealt with the policy of Indian Rulers towards the religions of the country. It goes to show that English statesmen in India had met with a good deal of criticism from certain classes in England on account of their wise attitude of religious neutrality, criticism which has not been unknown in these later days. In the Proclamation occurs this passage : ' Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subject.' The comment of the Press upon this was as follows : ' A large section of the population of these islands will see in these words a renunciation of Christianity in relation to the future Government of India ; but without such words the Proclamation would have been unsatisfactory to the majority of Englishmen : and worse than null and of no effect as regards the people of India.' The religious cry failed to have the effect the Brahman hierarchy had hoped from it, and it has never since been raised in that particular form. And again, in more recent years, when a certain amount of unrest had been caused by the first inauguration of plague measures, the cry was raised, ' The sanctity of your hearths and homes is in danger.' And so deftly and subtly was this, a social cry, raised that many Englishmen were deceived into crediting the absurd rumours that were current at the time, especially in the west of India. A writer has well said :

How smoothly persuasive, plausible and glib,
From pious lips is dropped the specious fib.
How clear, convincing, eloquent and hold,
The barefaced lie with manly courage told,
Which, spoke in public, falls with greater force,
And heard by thousands is believed of course.



INTRODUCTION

CSL

This cry, though it led to incendiaryism and assassination, again failed to appeal to the general common sense of the masses of the population. They had had long experience of the scrupulous care with which the English servants of the Crown in India do nothing to tear aside the veil which conceals the private life of the people.

Still more recently, when a certain amount of discontent had been aroused on the other side of India by that most statesmanlike measure of the late Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, in dividing up, for purposes of more efficient administration, a Province which, before its partition, had a population far exceeding that of any European State, except Russia, and greater than that of the United States of America. The discontent, it may as well be said here, was entirely confined to a certain class, who formed after all only one section of His Majesty's subjects in Bengal, but who, to the detriment of another great and important section of the population, had practically usurped the patronage of all minor official posts throughout the Province. The discontent of this class was caused by seeing their powers and privileges in this direction curtailed, and the balance redressed in favour of others who had as good a title to employment in the public service as they had. Only those who know Bengal well are aware of the extent of the power in the distribution of patronage possessed by a section of the native officials throughout the Provinces, not only in Bengal proper, but in Behar : and there is no doubt that, had it been decided that the partition of Bengal should take the form of the separation of Behar, similar results would have followed that did follow when the separation of the two Bengals had become an accomplished fact. Skilfully and subtly again did the Brahman hierarchy seek to bring this discontent to a focus : so skilfully indeed and so subtly, that again they succeeded in throwing dust into the eyes of a large number of Englishmen, who were entirely misled



INTRODUCTION

25
SL

to crediting the truth of the cry that was now raised, a political cry this time : ' Your nationality is in danger.' It is difficult for an impartial observer to see where nationality was involved in the question at all ; as, apart from the fact that the mass of the population of the new Province thus created are Muhammadans, it is significant that the touch of Eastern Bengal is harsher than that of Bengal proper, and after all the language of a people is often only an outward expression of their main characteristics. This points, therefore, to certain inherent differences of both moral and physical qualities between the two populations. However, the cry was raised, and, though in the first instance nationality did not enter into the matter at all, the movement has since been so skilfully engineered that there are not wanting those who now seriously believe that the measure was aimed at the destruction of a growing nationality. The way for such a cry had been carefully prepared beforehand. Bengal never has been a nation, and never has had a nationality, and therefore has been unable to evolve a national hero from its past history. The Brahman hierarchy, realizing this, offered Bengal a share in their own national hero, and so sprang into existence the cult of Sivaji, the founder of the Mahratta nationality, and the patron saint of the Brahman hierarchy. It is not without significance that Bengal should have returned the compliment by giving the Brahman hierarchy another watchword to add to their already existing one, and this, the true significance of which it does not require a very intimate acquaintance with the religious and domestic life of Bengal to understand, may now be seen inscribed on the walls of many a Mahratta homestead throughout the Deccan. Is it not possible, therefore, without any unnecessary straining of facts to make them fit in with a preconceived theory, for the conclusion to be come to that, in the jealousy of the predominant Brahmanical hierarchy of the moral ascendancy of England, may



INTRODUCTION

CSL

be found one cause for at least one phase of the present discontents ? And does not the fact that this is so redound to the credit of the British administration of India ? British rule in India has been often arraigned for being entirely materialistic. Thus, a recent writer has said : ' There is materialism in the system of Government materialism in the system of Education : materialism in the lives of Englishmen and Englishwomen in India. And yet the predominant caste in India has not found it so. On the contrary, in the civilizing mission of England, they have seen the death-knell of their own moral ascendancy. Well has an historian said : ' The dominion of Rome over the Western races was the Empire of civilization over barbarism. Among Gauls and Iberians Rome stood as a beacon light : they acknowledged its brightness and felt grateful for the illumination they received from it. The dominion of England in India is rather the Empire of the modern world over the mediaeval. The light we bring is not less real, but it is probably less attractive and received with less gratitude. It is not a glorious light shining in darkness, but a somewhat cold daylight introduced into the midst of a warm gorgeous twilight.'

In looking for the causation of another phase of the prevailing unrest, it must never be forgotten that British rule has created a great Middle Class for which under former Governments there was no room. This creation may well be styled ' The Monarchy of the Middle Classes '. And it is surely creditable to the Government of India that such a class should have arisen under its benign auspices, however inconvenient some of its aspirations may have become. There are two main sections of this great class : the moneyed and commercial classes form the one : the Literati, as they may be called for want of a better name, form the other. It is almost an unnecessary truism to say that as races become enlightened and civilized, it is a law of nature that if there is to be progress, there



INTRODUCTION

27
SL

must be discontent. But this discontent has different methods of manifesting itself. The former of the two classes have aspirations of their own which are not unreasonable : they, or, at any rate, a great many among them, aspire to become landed proprietors and so to acquire the influence which landed property always brings with it in India. This class may be said practically to have found themselves. The class known as Literati have always, as the history of Europe and Asia shows, been the heralds of revolution. With this class discontent takes the more dangerous form of a struggle for place, power, and privilege : and thus jealousy of the supreme power is again seen to be one of the springs of action. But in this case it is no longer a jealousy of the moral ascendancy of England so much as jealousy of her political ascendancy. This class are beginning to imagine and to make others imagine that they are a conquered nationality, and Sir John Seeley has shown what this means when he puts the question : ' Who does not know the extreme difficulty of repressing the disaffection of a conquered population ? ' This class, then, have not yet found themselves : and it will tax all the wisest statesmanship of the Rulers of India adequately to satisfy their aspirations, but so far as the Moderates among them, who form at present the great majority, are concerned, something may eventually perhaps be done in this direction, if they will only possess their souls in patience. British statesmen, and none know it better than this class, are sincerely desirous to meet their wishes, if they can do so without sacrificing the interests of the majority. Lord Morley has distinctly laid it down that ' The Indian was perfectly worthy of an authoritative share in the Paramount Power.' But the Extremists among them will be content with nothing less than the complete derogation to them on the part of Great Britain of all political power : and what that derogation of power would mean it needs no student of Asiatic history to



INTRODUCTION

CSL

prophesy. The conscience of England could not for one moment tolerate it. But even with this class of apparent irreconcilables, a way may, perhaps, with patience and time, be found of bringing them to a better mind. Lord Morley has finely said : ' Every one who had a chance should appeal to the better mind of educated India. He had never lost his invincible faith that there was a better mind in all great communities of the human race. If they could reach and awaken that better mind to apply itself to some practical purpose of bettering India, it would indeed have a beneficial effect.'

Other causes there are that have undoubtedly been at work below the surface in Bengal for the last quarter of a century, not unconnected with the unrealized hopes and ambitions of disappointed place-mongers, or unseated place-holders, but it is no part of the province of the writer to deal with these movements, which have been purely political in their character. Besides, there is always the danger of dogmatizing, which is especially valueless in the East where so much is hidden from the Englishman. Lord Minto, on the occasion of his recent great speech in connexion with the new Newspaper Act, is reported to have said : ' It was, I believe, the Duke of Wellington who said he had spent the best part of his life in trying to know what was going on on the other side of the hill on his front, and for us the purdah of the East unfortunately hides much from view. It would be better for us and for the many races of this country if we knew how to lift it. At present we have failed to do so. We cannot but speculate as to much it conceals, yet it is an all-important thing that our guess-work should not be hasty or unjust.' This is true : no one who has not lost his right to be called an Englishman, and who has not become entirely Orientalized and denationalized, can possibly hope to fathom the unfathomable depths of the Oriental mind, or to discover the secret springs that at any particular



INTRODUCTION

29
SL

season prompt the Oriental to any particular course of action.

In treating of the different phases of this general movement in India, ordinarily it would be unnecessary for a writer to go beyond the boundaries of that country to ascertain its causes, but the general ferment of unrest in Asia from Tokio to Constantinople is a factor that cannot be ignored in any historical review of the situation. The whole movement is but a sign of the times. This has been well brought out in some beautiful lines of William Watson which recently appeared in *The Spectator*, and which the writer of this sketch offers no apology for reproducing here :

Round me is the wealth,
The untainted wealth of English fields, and all
The passion and sweet trouble of the spring
Is in the air : and the remembrance comes
That not alone for stem and blade, for flower
And leaf, but for man also there are times
Of mighty vernal movement, seasons when
Life casts away the body of this death,
And a great surge of youth breaks on the world.
Then are the primal fountains clamorously
Unsealed : and then perchance are dread things born
Not unforetold by deep parturient pangs.

The writer has included in this series of Rulers of India a sketch of the career of that distinguished Director-General of French Possessions in India, Dupleix. It was undoubtedly the dream and ambition of Dupleix to see the ascendancy of France established in India, and it was largely his misfortune rather than his fault that his dream remained unrealized. He led the way, however, for his countrymen. The struggle for the re-establishment of French influence in India was a long one, and lasted well into the period of the great Governors-General. Much of their policy was indeed directed to thwarting it, and preventing any resurrection of that ascendancy in the



INTRODUCTION

CSL

councils of Oriental potentates that Dupleix had aimed at. It is fitting, therefore, that so distinguished a representative of France should find a place among the great British Governors-General. In another respect there is a peculiar appropriateness in thus bringing together French and British Rulers. Throughout the long contest between the French and the English for supremacy not only in India, but also on the American continent, the courtesy shown in the operations between the combatants stands out as one of its most marked features. Lord Cornwallis experienced this courtesy from the French, when he was a prisoner of war, and he acknowledged it in terms, of which Sir John Kaye has said : ' Good words and worthy to be remembered : a generous recognition of conduct right generous in an enemy, becoming the chivalry of the two foremost nations of the world.' He was no exception. It is recorded, too, that when the gallant Medows was about to meet an attack from the French on one occasion during the American Campaign, he gave out as the order of the day, ' As soon as our gallant and generous enemy are seen to advance in great numbers, the troops are to receive them with three huzzas, and then to be perfectly silent and obedient to their officers.' So friendly, indeed, was the attitude of the outposts on either side that a British sentry is said to have got into trouble by taking a pinch of snuff from a French sentry on duty at the opposite picquet. And not once or twice in India British officers and soldiers owed their lives to the intercession of French officers with their Native opponents. Apart from this there is a special appropriateness in thus bringing French and British Rulers of India together in a year when both nations are uniting in one grand commemoration in America, on soil where two such representatives of their respective nations as Montcalm and Wolfe, both alike distinguished for letters and for chivalry, fell, the one in the hour of victory, the other in the hour of defeat but not of disgrace.



INTRODUCTION

CSL
81

This is the third volume of the series of character sketches of Rulers of India which I am publishing under the auspices of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, who have courteously accorded me their permission to use their series of Rulers of India as originally edited by Sir W. W. Hunter, as the basis of my work. They have been carried out on the same system as the other volumes, and like them are equally adapted for lectures in schools and colleges, or for reading by the general public : the same idea also runs through them, that of showing the principles on which the administration of our great Indian Empire is carried on, principles of truth, justice, and righteousness, and the character of the Rulers upon whom has been imposed the great burden of Empire.

The authors of the volumes which I have used as the basis of this work are as follows :—

Mr. W. S. Seton-Karr, author of *The Marquess Cornwallis*.

The Rev. W. H. Hutton, author of *The Marquess Wellesley*.

Major Ross-of-Bladensburg, author of *The Marquess of Hastings*.

Mrs. Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Richardson Evans, Esq., authors of *Earl Amherst*.

Demetrius Boulger, Esq., author of *Lord William Bentinck*.

Captain L. J. Trotter, author of *The Earl of Auckland*.

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Hardinge, author of *Viscount Hardinge*.

Colonel Malleeson, C.S.I., author of *Dupleix*.

I have also been indebted to Sir John Seeley's *The Expansion of England*, and to Sir Alfred Lyall's *British Dominion in India*.

To Lord Curzon, late Viceroy of India, and Chancellor of the University of Oxford, whose enthusiasm in all that



INTRODUCTION

CSL

related to the welfare of India shone with undimmed lustre, a beacon to his generation, throughout the seven long years of his Viceroyalty, this volume is, by his gracious permission, dedicated.

G. D. OSWELL.

June.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER I	
THE CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE: MARQUESS CORNWALLIS, 1738-1805	35
CHAPTER II	
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY INTO THE SUPREME POWER IN INDIA: MARQUESS WELLESLEY, 1760-1842	61
CHAPTER III	
THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF THE MAHRATTA POWERS: MARQUESS OF HASTINGS, 1754-1826	82
CHAPTER IV	
THE BRITISH ADVANCE EASTWARDS TO BURMAH: EARL AMHERST, 1773-1857	104
CHAPTER V	
THE COMPANY AS A GOVERNING AND NON-TRADING POWER: LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK, 1774-1839	130
CHAPTER VI	
THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR: EARL OF AUCKLAND, 1784-1849	155
CHAPTER VII	
THE ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH DOMINIONS INTO THE PUNJAB: VISCOUNT HARDINGE, 1785-1856	184
CHAPTER VIII	
THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIA BY THE EUROPEAN NATIONS: DUPLEX AND THE FRENCH, 1741-1809	210



CSL

CHAPTER I

THE CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE

MARQUESS CORNWALLIS, 1738-1805

FEW names stand higher in the long roll of the distinguished men who have been Rulers of India than that of Lord Cornwallis. Sir John Kaye has said : ' Lord Cornwallis is the first Indian Ruler who can properly be regarded as an administrator. Up to the time of his arrival in India, the English in India had been engaged in a great struggle for existence. Clive conquered the richest Province of India. Hastings reduced it to something like order. But it was not until Cornwallis carried to that country the large-minded liberality of a benevolent English statesman, that our administrative efforts took shape and consistency and the entire internal management of the country under our rule was regulated by a code of written laws (or regulations) intended to confer upon the Natives of India the benefits of as much European wisdom and benevolence as was compatible with a due regard for the character of Native institutions.' For some time the idea had been gaining ground amongst the Directors of the East India Company that the right to trade which their servants in India possessed was likely to injure their efficiency as administrators, not that there were not very many honourable and upright men amongst them who would have scorned to use their official position for their own enrichment. But it was recognized that the people they were now being called upon to rule would never be brought to believe in the absolute impartiality of administrators whose hands, as they thought, were sullied by the private interests of trade. And as Lord Cornwallis has himself said : ' The world will not tamely submit to be reformed by those who are in any way justly or unjustly suspected of subordinating public to private interests.'



CSL

They had decided, therefore, in the year 1780, that other than Company's servants should be eligible for Indian Governorships. The sword of Clive and the diplomacy of Warren Hastings had completely changed the character of the Company: from being a purely commercial and trading power, it had become a ruling power. Fittingly, therefore, did the Directors decide to look for administrators of what was now rapidly becoming an Empire, amongst that class which has been trained in the arts of Government and the science of statesmanship through long generations, the aristocracy of England. It was a fortunate thing for the country that their choice should have fallen upon such men as Lord Macartney and Lord Cornwallis, with whom to inaugurate their new régime. Of Lord Macartney, who was deputed to Madras in the year that the Directors had decided to adopt this new departure, it has been said that, 'No public servant ever left office with purer hands;' and it has been recorded that the East India Directors presented him on vacating office with a piece of plate worth £1,000 'for his forbearance, justice, and great pecuniary moderation'.

Cornwallis came of distinguished Irish ancestry; but the family had long held estates in England in the county of Suffolk. In succession, the titles of Baronet, Baron, and Earl had been conferred on the heads of the family; and it was to be the destiny of Cornwallis to raise the dignity of the family still higher, and to become the first Marquess, as his father had become the first Earl. He was born in London, and was educated at Eton, where an accident at hockey nearly deprived him of his eyesight, and the country of his future services. As it was, the accident is said to have caused a slight, but permanent obliquity of vision; but, fortunately, did not interfere with his mental development into one of the most far-seeing statesmen of his or of any age. He adopted the Army as his profession, and obtained his first commission in the Guards at the age of eighteen. As usual with the scions of noble families, foreign travel formed part of his equipment for a public career: and with the permission of the Commander-in-Chief he was sent to the Continent in charge of a Prussian officer. After visiting the principal



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

37

capitals of Europe, he entered the Military Academy at Turin, where he studied the theory of war, and prepared himself for his future career as a soldier. The discipline was good, and young Cornwallis, it is recorded, 'made good progress in his exercises; especially in those of the more active kind, and evinced an excellent disposition, a power of self-control and resistance of evil, very unusual at that time in young aristocrats at the dawn of manhood.'

The Seven Years' War was now in progress. This war has been described as Pitt's War, for he alone appears to have realized what the real issues at stake were—the unbarring of the doors that were being shut by France against England's expansion in the East and West. And it was a true forecast, for out of this war, owing mainly to the genius and sword of Wolfe and Clive, England emerged as the Maker of Empires. Cornwallis now saw an opportunity for active service which was not to be neglected; he was at Geneva when he heard that an English Army was to be employed in Germany, and that his regiment, the Guards, had been ordered to the front. He hurried to Cologne to join it, but found himself too late: he was in a dilemma, and wrote to a friend in these terms: 'Only imagine having set out without leave, come two hundred leagues, and my regiment gone without me.' However, his offence was treated leniently, and in a very short time he found himself an aide de camp on the personal staff of Lord Granby, in the autumn of 1758. He was present at the battle of Minden in the following year. Being promoted to a captaincy in a regiment only recently formed, the 85th, he returned to England the same year, and entered Parliament as member for Eye. In 1761, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel and placed in command of the 12th Foot, which was in Germany at the time. Again he found himself under the command of Lord Granby, and every opportunity was given him of distinguishing himself of which, it is needless to say, he took full advantage. His regiment, it is recorded, was one of the best in the field, and was always in the front when there was work to be done.

Cornwallis lost his father in the year 1762: and was now the Earl, with a seat in the House of Lords. He

RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

still, however, continued to pay attention to his military duties, ever having in view the possibility of active service in the field, which he always called his 'favourite passion', and, like a modern distinguished general, Sir James Willcocks, he was never happier than when he was with his beloved soldiers. So for some three years he moved about the country with his regiment, the 12th Foot. In 1765 he was made an aide de camp of the King, and received the command of the 33rd Regiment. With this military appointment he also received that of Chief Justice in Eyre, which, as one of his biographers notes, might appear to the uninitiated reader as a remarkable conjunction of offices: and he hastens to add, 'The functions of the Chief Justiceship, which was a relic of old feudal times, mainly relating to the maintenance of forest-rights, had long since fallen into desuetude, and the office had become a sinecure.' He married in 1768, and his married life was destined to be one of unclouded happiness, but a short one of some ten years only: after his marriage he withdrew himself a good deal from public affairs, so far as attendance in the House of Lords was concerned, though he was generally found in his place on important occasions. He still, however, held certain offices, such as that of Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, an office the duties of which were performed by deputy, and that of Constable of the Tower of London. In 1770 for some reason or another that has never been adequately explained, he fell under the displeasure of Junius, 'that great anonymous writer,' as the historian has recorded, 'whose malignant vigilance nothing in high places could escape.' Instances, however, are not wanting in history, both in ancient and in modern times, both in England and in India, of malignant writers, or a malignant Press, violently denouncing men whose only crime, to them, is that of following the dictates of their own conscience, instead of courting a fleeting popularity. And denunciations from such a source may generally be regarded as the highest compliments a public servant can receive. He continued to lead the quiet life of an English country gentleman, but this was soon to be interrupted once and for ever. He was not a man whom his country could afford to leave in such seclusion when any great



crisis occurred which needed England's best and noblest sons.

Such a crisis now arose in the strained relations between the Mother-country and her American Colonies. This was to be the real commencement of Cornwallis's public career. Henceforth, as his biographer has recorded, 'he was to know no rest. From America to the Continent: from England to India: from India to Ireland, and back to India to die, his whole career was one of duty and self-sacrifice.' He was now called on to draw his sword in a cause with which he was not in sympathy. He had indeed, from his place in Parliament steadily opposed the Ministry in the conduct of colonial affairs in America, and he regretted the contest on which they had now embarked, but not for a moment did he hesitate in what he conceived to be his first duty as a soldier, obedience to the orders of his Sovereign. Lord Chatham, it has been recorded, withdrew his son from the King's Army, rather than that he should use his sword in what he held to be an unrighteous cause. Cornwallis, on the other hand, accepted the commission of lieutenant-general, and having taken command of his division of the Army, proceeded to America early in 1776. It is no part of the scope of this sketch to deal with the American War of Independence. It is sufficient to note that Cornwallis's own share in the operations was at all times a distinguished one. On three separate occasions he met and fairly defeated the Colonists. He was at all times prompt and rapid in his own movements. His personal gallantry and intrepidity were beyond all praise. It is recorded how, when arrangements were being made to storm Charleston, he actually volunteered to form one of the storming party: the terms in which he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief to make the offer are thoroughly characteristic: he did not wish it to be generally known that he had volunteered, so he wrote: 'If you approve of my offer, it will be sufficient for you to say, "Your Lordship will take a ride at such an hour."' In the final scene of all, the surrender at York Town, when all hopes of eventual succour from the British fleet failed him, he made a gallant attempt to cut his way out through the enemy, and only when that failed, did he



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

adopt the bitter alternative of surrender to save any further useless sacrifice of life. The terms granted by his gallant foes under the command of Washington himself, were a recognition of the gallantry of the British commander and his troops: 'The British garrison were to march out with shouldered arms, colours cased, and drums beating; the cavalry with swords drawn and trumpets sounding; and then they were to ground their arms and become prisoners of war: the officers being permitted to retain all side-arms.' Having been a prisoner-of-war for some three months, Cornwallis was allowed to return to England on parole early in 1782, and early in the next year he was finally released from parole.

England had not emerged triumphant from the great struggle; but Cornwallis had not lost the confidence either of the King or of the Ministry of the day. He himself was now prepared to accept responsible office. It is sometimes difficult to fathom the secret springs of action in the careers of great men. In the case of Cornwallis it was undoubtedly the death of his wife, which had occurred during the American campaign, that influenced his whole after-career, and made a life of ceaseless activity in the public service almost a necessity for him. But he would not sacrifice his convictions even to obtain office: and the offer of the Governor-Generalship of India had to be made to him three times before the conditions attaching to the appointment were sufficiently modified to enable him to accept it. He was determined that it should never be said of him:—

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe.

Only when he was assured that his powers for good would not be rendered nugatory by that factious opposition in Council that his great predecessor had encountered, did he accept the offer of the Governor-Generalship of India, combined, as it was to be in his case, with the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in India. But even then, his own words show that it was not without reluctance that he accepted this important charge: 'The proposal of going to India with the circumstance of Governor-



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

GL

General being independent of his Council, and having the supreme command of the military, has been pressed upon me so strongly that, much against my will, and with grief of heart, I have been obliged to say yes, and to exchange a life of ease and content to encounter all the plagues and miseries of command and public station.'

Cornwallis left England for India in May, 1786 ; he was accompanied by a small staff consisting of Colonel Ross, who acted as his secretary, Captain Haldane, and Lieutenant Madden. Among his fellow passengers was Mr., afterwards Sir John, Shore, who was at a later date to be one of his successors in the Governor-Generalship. Shore was an authority on most problems of Indian administration, and Cornwallis obtained much useful information from conversations with him. They were afterwards to differ on points of detail in the actual work of administration, but Shore has acknowledged that as regards principles they were at one. Cornwallis arrived in India during the steamy month of September, and took up his residence in Calcutta. His private life, from the outset, was simple and unostentatious. A letter written about this time to his son gives a glimpse of his routine : ' I get on horseback just as the dawn of day begins to appear, ride on the same road and the same distance, pass the whole forenoon, after my return from riding, in doing business, and almost exactly the same portion of time every day at table, drive out in a phaeton a little before sunset, then write or read over letters or papers on business for two hours : sit down at nine with two or three officers of my family to some fruit and a biscuit, and go to bed soon after the clock strikes ten. I don't think the greatest sap at Eton can lead a duller life than this.' And he adds, ' You must write to me by every opportunity, and longer letters than I write to you : for I have a great deal more business every day than you have upon a whole school day, and I never get a holiday. I have rode once upon an elephant, but it is so like going in a cart that you would not think it very agreeable.' One letter is especially characteristic of his simple nature : ' You will have heard,' he wrote, ' that soon after I left England, I was elected Knight of the Garter, and very likely laughed at me for wishing to



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

wear a blue riband over my fat belly. But I can assure you, I neither asked for it nor wished for it. The reasonable object of ambition to a man is to have his name transmitted to posterity for eminent services rendered to his country and to mankind. Nobody asks or cares whether Hampden, Marlborough, Pelham, or Wolfe were Knights of the Garter.' But his home correspondence, which, as Sir John Kaye has very justly remarked, is what helps to keep men alive in India, was only one of his recreations. He had stern work to do, and he set himself to do it from the hour of his arrival.

It had long been the overpowering conviction of Cornwallis, records the historian, that 'the prosperity of the British Empire in India depended more upon the character of the European functionaries employed in its administration than upon anything in the world beside'. The Directors of the East India Company had begun at last to realize that something more than mere sumptuary laws and letters of remonstrance had become necessary. The Ministers of the Crown had now also their say in the matter. The outcome of this feeling had been the clause attached to the India Bill of 1784, that no servants of the Company were to engage in private trade, which was felt to be the source of much of the mischief : and which had prevented the wise and beneficent measures of Clive and Warren Hastings from having their full effect. It is due to these great statesmen to say that when Cornwallis took up office he found generally a vast improvement in the character and conduct of the young servants of the Company. But the law prohibiting private trade was almost universally evaded. An illustration of this has been given by Sir John Kaye in an extract from *Lives of the Lindsays*. Mr. Robert Lindsay of the Company's service, he records, dated 'the origin of the fortune he acquired in the Company's service from the conspicuous advantage he derived from the great command of money to carry on his commercial pursuits'. Among the speculations he indulged in was ship-building, but this seems to have been one of his least successful ventures. And his mother wrote out to him that 'she had no doubt he was a very scientific ship-builder, but she had one request to make of him, which



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

GL
43

was that he would not come to England in a ship of his own making'. Cornwallis saw that the real root of the mischief was the scanty pay the servants of the Company at this time received; and that the only remedy was for the Company to give adequate salaries proportionate to the services they expected their servants to render. He had written to a friend in these terms: 'I shall never think it a wise measure in this country to place men in great and responsible situations where the prosperity of our affairs must depend upon their exertions as well as their integrity without giving them the means in a certain number of years of acquiring honestly and openly a moderate fortune.' He recommended, therefore, the granting of high official salaries, and the entire cutting off of all personal trade. Cornwallis backed up his recommendations with strong language: 'If it is a maxim that no Government can command honest services, and that, pay our servants as we please, they will equally cheat, the sooner that we leave this country the better. I am sure that, under that supposition, I can be of no use, and my salary is so much thrown away: nothing will be so easy as to find a Governor-General of Bengal who will serve without salary.' This letter had the desired effect, and the Court of Directors at length gave a somewhat grudging assent to his scheme.

But the Augean stable was not yet quite cleansed. Cornwallis's difficulties in creating a purer atmosphere had been increased by the number of adventurers who were constantly arriving in India armed with recommendations from high personages in England; and he had to write to a friend, Lord Sydney, on the subject in these terms: 'I am still persecuted every day by people coming out with letters to me, who either get into jail or starve in the foreign settlements. For God's sake do all in your power to stop this madness.' He himself took effectual steps to check this practice. Writing to a noble lord who had recommended a certain person to his attention, he said he would be glad to do what he could: 'But here, my lord,' he added, 'we are in the habit of looking for the man for the place, and not for the place for the man.' It is recorded of Clive that, 'when such an individual



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

was sent out to him with a strong letter of recommendation from one of the Ministers of the day, he said to him "Well, chap, how much do you want?" On the man replying that he would be delighted if by laborious service he could obtain a competence, Clive at once wrote him out a cheque for a large amount, and told him to leave India by the ship he had come in, and once in England again, to remain there.' Cornwallis used to write to the men who came begging to him for a place after this formula: 'If I was inclined to serve you, it is wholly out of my power to do it, without a breach of my duty. I most earnestly advise you to return to England as soon as possible, or I shall be under the necessity of sending you there.' Even the Directors occasionally thus transgressed, but they soon desisted when they found Cornwallis threatening resignation. He had written to them in these strong terms: 'If so pernicious a system should be again revived, I should feel myself obliged to request that some other person might immediately take from me the responsibility of governing these extensive dominions, that I might preserve my own character, and not be a witness to the ruin of the interests of my country.' The Directors were not altogether to blame in the matter: they themselves were continually being pressed from all sides for such letters of recommendation; but that they learnt their lesson, and henceforth were really anxious to find a man for the post and not a post for the man, there is abundant evidence to show. A letter that has kindly been placed at the disposal of the writer by Colonel W. G. Ross, of the Royal Engineers, a distant relative of Lord Cornwallis's great friend and secretary, Colonel Ross, will serve to illustrate this. It is a letter from the Chairman of the East India Company to Colonel Ross's grandfather, Mr. Alexander Ross, a distinguished civilian, who was a contemporary of Mountstuart Elphinstone, and who was serving in India during Cornwallis's second administration, and is to this effect: 'Among the most important duties of the Chairman of the East India Company is that of selecting the individuals best qualified to fill those high stations abroad, the appointment to which is vested by law in the Court of Directors. In the discharge of this duty, I have scrutinized with



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

45
SL

most anxious solicitude the merits of those servants of the Bengal establishment who are eligible for the appointment. Among them there are some with whom my family are connected, and others whose friends here have been urgent for their advancement; but the situation is in my mind of too great importance to be disposed of on any other grounds than those of merit and service. I have, therefore, proposed your name to the Court of Directors for the appointment. I frankly tell you that if I could have found any other person better qualified in my estimation for the office, I should think it my duty to propose him to the Court: and it must be a gratifying reflection to you—strangers as we are to each other—that for the preference now shown to you, you are indebted entirely to your high character and recorded services, from which I derive full assurance that the public interest will be promoted by the selection I have made.’ Cornwallis had naturally to face a good deal of unpopularity in his task of purifying the administration: but, in the end, the great reputation his own consistent honesty of character had won him changed the feelings of alarm and irritation his reforms had at first induced, into general respect and even applause and admiration. Writing to Warren Hastings, Mr. Shore had said: ‘His situation was uncomfortable on our arrival: he now receives the respect due to his zeal, integrity, and indefatigable application.’ Of the work thus achieved by Cornwallis, the historian has finely said: ‘Of the corruption that then traversed the land, Lord Cornwallis sounded the death-knell. And from that time the great Company of Merchants which governed India was served by a succession of soldiers and civilians unsurpassed in rectitude of life by any whose names are recorded in the great muster-roll of the world.’

After a year’s hard work at head quarters, Cornwallis proceeded on tour in the Provinces. One object he had in view was to see for himself the progress of the administration under his recent reforms: and also to visit the then frontier country of Oudh, where he found much to seek in the administration of the State. He also wished especially to have an opportunity of inspecting the military stations. He was much struck with the appearance and



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

the military qualities of the Company's Sepoys, which was largely due to the zeal and emulation of their British officers. How high these military qualities still are is evident from the order of the day recently issued by the general commanding the operations against the hardy mountaineers on the North-West Frontiers of India, on the gallant conduct of some of his Punjabi soldiers in defence of a picquet, which was to this effect: 'Jemadar Mirafzal, who was twice severely wounded, concealed the fact until he died: Ram Singh was wounded, but never ceased signalling: and Naik Jahandad commanded the post after the death of the Jemadar, though himself wounded in the head.' The appearance of the Company's European troops, however, gave him anything but satisfaction. And he wrote to the Directors urging a better system of recruiting for the ranks, and pressing the necessity of placing the officers of their European troops on the same footing as those of the King's forces. He wisely said: 'I think it must be universally admitted that, without a large and well-regulated body of Europeans, our hold of these valuable dominions must be very insecure. It cannot be expected that even the best of treatment would constantly conciliate the willing obedience of so vast a body of people, differing from ourselves in almost every circumstance of laws, religions, and customs: and oppressions of individuals, errors of government, and several other unforeseen causes, will no doubt arouse an inclination to revolt.' On such occasions it would not be wise to place great dependence upon their countrymen who compose the native regiments, to secure their subjection.' And what he wrote in 1787 is equally applicable to the conditions prevailing in 1908, when, as the Viceroy of India, Lord Minto, has publicly stated, insidious attempts are being made to undermine the loyalty of the Indian troops that form so distinguished a branch of the British Army; and when it has been seriously proposed by a recent writer that British troops should be withdrawn altogether from India. Well has a writer in *The Spectator* said with regard to this proposal: 'Let the meaning of that be squarely faced in England, and how many persons could bring themselves to accept the almost certain out-



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

47
SL

come under the plea of treating India with more sympathy. The whole question of the reform of the military service of the country was to engage Cornwallis's attention again during the last days of his rule : but he waited till his return to England in order that he might discuss the subject personally with the King's Government : and he had the satisfaction of being able to get measures sanctioned that substantially improved the pay and prospects of military officers serving in India. And it is recorded by the historian that ' Nothing did more to improve the character of the officers of the Indian Army than this important reform '.

With Cornwallis's return to Calcutta, a quiet period ensued for some two years, which he utilized in elaborating his schemes for further reforms, the most important of which were to be in the revenue and judicial branches of the administration. Amongst his chief advisers in these important matters were Sir John Shore, Sir George Barlow, and Sir William Jones, who were all distinguished for profound knowledge of the particular branch of the public administration with which it had fallen to their lot to be closely connected. No one had a more accurate knowledge of agricultural conditions in Bengal and Behar, and of the revenue and rent systems therein prevailing, than Sir John Shore, and Mr. Seton-Karr has spoken of his famous minutes in these terms : ' Many of Shore's observations, deductions, and reasons are as just and unimpeachable at this hour as they were when written just a century ago. His remarks on native character and proclivities are pertinent at this very day. No one can pretend to understand the origin of the Bengal Zamindari system who has not carefully studied this text-book on the subject.' Cornwallis, though he differed from Shore on more than one important point, always acknowledged in handsome terms his obligation to him, when he at length came to translate the results of his deliberations into acts. In matters connected with the administration of justice, and generally with the law or regulations of the British Settlements, Cornwallis was very largely guided by the advice of Sir George Barlow. In the same department of law, he also availed himself of the advice and assistance of the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

famous Oriental scholar, Sir William Jones. This period of Cornwallis's career cannot be passed over without noticing the influence his high character exerted indirectly, in the direction of an improvement in the tone of the society of the capital. The historian has thus written: 'He was one who ever maintained the dignity of his station without personal arrogance or exclusiveness: and who rendered his own good example more potential for good by the kindly consideration with which he ever treated his inferiors. The kindness of his heart and the courtesy of his manners compelled his countrymen to regard him with equal affection and respect.' An English clergyman named Tennant, as recorded by Sir John Kaye, also gave his testimony in these terms: 'A reformation highly commendable has been effected in the social morality of the English in India, partly from necessity, but more from the example of the Marquess Cornwallis, whose elevated rank and noble birth gave him in a great measure the guidance of fashion. Regular hours and sobriety of conduct became as decidedly the test of a man of fashion, as irregularity formerly had been.'

Before he could do more than set the machinery in motion for the perfecting of his schemes of reform, Cornwallis was confronted by the necessity of ordering war to be undertaken against the Ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan. For once at least there was complete unanimity in the Council of the Governor-General. War, it was seen, was the only remedy to apply to the unprovoked aggression of Tipu upon the possessions of the faithful ally of the British, the Raja of Travancore. Cornwallis had made up his mind that it was his duty to proceed in person to take up both the civil and the military command at Madras, when the news reached him, early in 1790, that General Medows had been appointed to the twofold office of Governor of Madras and Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army. He had a very high reputation, as is evident from his further appointment the same year to be Provisional Governor-General 'upon the death, removal, or resignation of Earl Cornwallis'. General Medows had served with great distinction in the American War of Independence, and as a soldier was a man of most dis-



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

49

tinguished gallantry and nobility of mind : this is evidenced by the first order of the day that he addressed to the troops under his command, 'The Commander-in-Chief is happy to find himself at the head of that Army whose appearance adorns the country he trusts their bravery and discipline will save. An Army that is brave and obedient, that is patient of labour and fearless of danger, that surmounts difficulties and is full of resources, but above all whose cause is just, has reason to hope to be invincible against a cruel and ambitious tyrant, whose savage treatment of his prisoners but too many present have experienced. However, should the fortune of war put him in our hands, uncontaminated by his base example, let him be treated with every act of humanity and generosity, and enlightened if possible by a treatment so much the reverse of his own. To a generous mind a fault acknowledged is a fault forgot : and an enemy in our power is an enemy no more.' Unfortunately for his military reputation, Medows, though a soldier to his finger-tips, was no strategist. And what the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, has called that cruel judgement of the Roman historian, must be passed upon him as a commander : 'All his friends would have thought him to be capable of high command had he not been entrusted with such an office.' Cornwallis, indeed, had publicly proclaimed his confidence in the ability of General Medows to bring the war to a successful conclusion : but as month after month went by without any substantial advance being made, Cornwallis began to think that matters were not proceeding satisfactorily, and he wrote to his brother : 'Our war on the coast has hitherto not succeeded so well as we had a right to expect. Our Army, the finest and best appointed that ever took the field in India, is worn down with unprofitable fatigue, and much discontented with the commanders.' He could not but recall to mind the similar conduct of the campaign in America, under more or less incompetent chiefs. He soon determined that it was his duty to take the command of the operations himself. Towards the close of 1790, therefore, he proceeded to Madras, and took over from Medows the command of the Army in the field. It speaks well for the general



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

whom he had thus superseded, that he felt no resentment, but continued to carry out the orders of Cornwallis with complete cordiality and loyalty: and it also says much for Cornwallis's tact and judgement that this was the happy result of his action.

Cornwallis had not anticipated an easy task in bringing Tipu to terms, nor did he find it such: it took him two campaigns, and it was not till the spring of 1792 that he found himself in a position, before Tipu's capital, Seringapatam, to try final conclusions with the Muhammadan usurper. But Tipu himself, after having attempted to destroy 'the soul and head of the Army', by a treacherous device directed against the life of its commander, was disinclined at the moment to try a final throw, and so risk the loss of his capital and possibly his crown. He therefore sued for peace. And Cornwallis decided to accept the peace offered. Not the least disappointed man in the Army at this apparently tame ending to the campaign was General Medows: he, like other equally brave soldiers, had set his heart on a storm of the capital. It is recorded of him that he had modestly declined the offer of the Governor-Generalship which had reached him in camp, but had added: 'I will never quit this country till I have commanded the storming-party at Seringapatam.' He had one special reason for wishing for some service such as a forlorn hope of this kind, that would show his quality. He wished to atone for what he considered an unpardonable sin that he had committed in failing to carry out in its entirety a movement as designed by Cornwallis when closing up round Tipu's capital. He felt this very much, and it is recorded that when he met Cornwallis after the operations, and discovered that he had been wounded in the hand, he remarked: 'It is I that should have got that rap over the knuckles.' A picture was painted and a medal struck to commemorate the final scene of this campaign, when Tipu's two eldest sons were brought to the tent of the Governor-General, and formally delivered over to his care as hostages for the fulfilment by Tipu of the terms of the Treaty made with him at the conclusion of the war. The reward of Cornwallis for his conduct of the campaign was a Marquisate. With charac-



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

51

teristic conscientiousness, and moderation where monetary rewards were in question, he gave up to the Army his own magnificent share of prize-money. General Medows, not to be outdone in generosity, did the same. A few other matters connected with foreign policy received the attention of Cornwallis during his tenure of office. Thus, he offered to mediate between Scindia and the Nawab-Vizier of Oudh when they were on bad terms with each other : at the same time he warned the Mahratta Ruler that the Nawab was an ally of the British, and that any injury done to him would be regarded as tantamount to an injury done to the British, and treated accordingly. Thus he prevented a threatened hostile Mahratta demonstration against Oudh. A mission was also dispatched by him to Nipal, and was as usual courteously received, but that was all. No advantage from a commercial point of view followed it. One of Cornwallis's last acts was the reduction of Pondicheri, which was followed by the temporary cession of the other French Settlements and Factories in India.

Cornwallis now had leisure to complete his task of internal reforms. The outcome of his long deliberations with his advisers on the subject of the Settlement of the Land Revenue in Bengal was the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The whole question of the Settlement of the Land Revenue in India has been very ably dealt with in a series of resolutions that appeared in the *Imperial Gazette* during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon : these were afterwards embodied in one volume, which may appropriately be styled, *The Apologia of the Government of India on its Land Revenue Policy*. The principles that have actuated the British Rulers of India in their assessment of the share of revenue from land that should fall to the Government, and the systems of settlement at work in the different provinces of the empire are there set forth in a clear and interesting manner. It is unnecessary, therefore, to dilate on them here, nor would the limits of this sketch allow of their adequate treatment. The objects that Cornwallis had in view in his treatment of the subject were twofold. He wished to recognize the existing class of Zamindars as landed proprietors with the

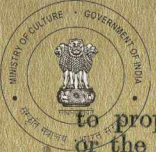


RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

prospect of an increased rental from the cultivation of the land; and he further wished that the settlement made with them should be of such a character that they would have some inducement to improve their estates; and this he considered that only a settlement made permanent and fixed for ever would effect. Mr. Seton-Karr has thus written of this Permanent Settlement: 'Looking at it solely from the political point of view, it was the means of allaying apprehensions and removing doubts, while it proved a strong incentive to good behaviour, and to something beyond passive loyalty in seditious and troublous times. Some of the fundamental principles of the system were practical and sound. The change from the mere collecting agent, with his status that might or might not become hereditary: the recognition as a matter of right of Rajas, Chieftains, and other superior Landlords: the grave and measured language of a Proclamation putting an end to brief and temporary contrivances for the realization of the dues of the State: the incentives to prudent management afforded by the prospect of additional rental: and the sense of security, the limited ownership, and power of transmission and disposal were, in theory, excellent. Lord Cornwallis had only the experience and the legacies of failure to guide him. Pressed for ways and means, and anxious for reform in more departments than one, he committed himself to a policy which, in regard to the three interested parties—the Zamindar, the Ryot, and the Ruling Power—assured the welfare of the first, somewhat postponed the claims of the second, and sacrificed the increment of the third.'

Putting aside the question of the loss of increment to the State, which some authorities have estimated to amount to as much as twenty million pounds a year, it is a question whether the advantages, especially from a political point of view, did not counterbalance the disadvantages. Here again Mr. Seton-Karr may be quoted: 'In one aspect the Settlement has not received its due meed of praise. Here for the first time in Oriental history was seen the spectacle of a foreign Ruler binding himself and his successors to abstain from periodical revisions of the land-tax, almost creating a new race of landlords: giving



to property another title than the sword of its owner, or the favour of a Viceroy : and content to leave to the Zamindars the whole profit resulting from increased population and undisturbed peace. At this distance of time it is not very easy to estimate the exact effect of such abnegation on the minds of the great Zamindars of Bengal and Behar, as well as on the chiefs and princes of neighbouring States. It is sometimes said that a policy of this kind is ascribed by Natives to weakness and fear. Whatever may be the case in other instances, and however necessary it may be to rule Orientals by firmness and strict justice quite as much as by conciliation, it can hardly be said that the moderation of Cornwallis was considered a sign of impotence. It must have been felt all over the Province as a relief, if not a blessing.' One excellent effect Mr. Seton-Karr has shown it undoubtedly had. During the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, which was as great a test of loyalty as any crisis could possibly have been, the mutineers met with no countenance from the Zamindars of Bengal. 'After the first outbreak at the station,' he writes, 'where they were resolutely met by a mere handful of Englishmen, the Sepoys took to the villages and the jungles, and then they literally melted away before the impassive demeanour, the want of sympathy, and the silent loyalty of the Zamindars.' The natural corollary to the Permanent Settlement was the relegation of Collectors to their own proper functions. Hitherto the Civil servant had been Judge as well as Collector ; but henceforth his judicial powers were withdrawn, and the Collector was placed in a definite, responsible, and well-salaried post.

This change necessitated a thorough reorganization of the Civil and Criminal Courts of Justice, and this was the next reform that Cornwallis set his hand to complete. There is abundant evidence to show that such reform was necessary. All criminal jurisdiction had been left in the hands of the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, and all criminal trials were conducted by Native Judges ; and though a Court of Criminal Appeal had been established at Calcutta ; and though the English Collectors of Revenue were supposed to overlook the proceedings of the Native



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Magistrates in the districts to see that witnesses were duly examined; and though the proceedings were conducted with a certain amount of fairness and impartiality, there was, as Mr. Seton-Karr shows, so much confusion, diversity of practice, and uncertainty of jurisdiction, that justice, if not altogether impeded, was at any rate greatly delayed. One illustration of this will suffice. Mr. Seton-Karr has stated that, on looking over some of the old records, he discovered the finding and sentence of the Criminal Court in one case ending with the direction, given in Persian, as was usual at the time, *Kaid bashad*, 'let the man be imprisoned,' without any term of imprisonment being defined: and he adds that there was a tradition existing as late as 1845 among the old Native employés of the Magistrate's Office, of an individual who, having been sentenced to indefinite imprisonment for stealing some of a neighbour's rice crop, remained in durance for many years. But he humorously adds that, 'the rules of prison discipline at the time were so lax both then and for many years afterwards, that though prisoners were locked up at night, they had a good deal of liberty during the day, walked about the bazars, did, or pretended to do, a little work in repairing the roads and clearing out the ditches of the station, saw their friends, and often obtained tobacco, sweetmeats, and other indulgences, and altogether, indeed, had a good time.' Equal confusion and uncertainty existed in the management of civil cases. Mr. Seton-Karr well points out the anomalies of such a state of things: 'Collectors who could only advise Native Judges; English Magistrates who might apprehend, and yet not try criminals; a Government which acted as a sort of referee which might prevent unjust sentences in capital cases, but could not interfere to any valid purpose in the earlier stages of an Assize, were evidently not the agencies fitted to deal with a population which, however unwarlike and generally tractable, contained in towns and villages many of the elements of crime and disorder.' The reforms instituted by Cornwallis are a matter of history, and the historian is careful to note that the change made by Cornwallis did not consist in alterations in the ancient customs and usages of the country, affecting the



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

55
SL

rights of person and property : it related chiefly to the giving security to those rights, by affording to our Native subjects the means of obtaining redress against any infringement of them, either by the Government itself, its officers or individuals of any character or description.' These reforms of Cornwallis were all embodied in what is known as the Cornwallis Code of 1793, which has always been regarded as the commencement of a new era. This Code, as Mr. Seton-Karr has said, 'Whether for revenue, police, criminal and civil justice, or other function, defined and set bounds to authority, created procedure by a regular system of appeal, guarded against the miscarriage of justice, and founded the Civil Service of India as it exists to this day.'

Towards the close of the year 1793, Cornwallis returned to England, only to find that his services were again in requisition by the Government. He had anticipated something of the kind, for he had written to a friend shortly after his arrival in England : 'Much as I wish for quiet, I am afraid that I shall be forced from my intended retirement and be engaged in a very difficult and hazardous situation in the busy scene on the Continent.' The Government had intended to give him the command of the English Army in Flanders in supersession of the Duke of York, and the eventual command of the Allied Forces of England, Prussia, and Austria, in their operations against France. However, insurmountable difficulties stood in the way, and Cornwallis, after a few weeks' stay on the Continent, returned to England again in the middle of 1794. He himself was not sorry that the matter had ended thus, and he wrote to a friend to this effect, 'I should have been in the most embarrassing and dangerous situation possible, with every prospect of ruin to myself and very little probability of rendering any essential service to my country.' In 1795 Cornwallis was appointed Master-General of the Ordnance, which post gave him a seat in the Cabinet. He still continued to take great interest in Indian affairs, and it says much for the great reputation which his tact and judgement in public affairs had gained him that, on a serious crisis occurring in India, through an incipient mutiny among the officers of the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Company's Military Service, the Government should have seriously thought of sending him out to put matters straight. Dundas, the Chairman of the Court of Directors, thought so seriously of the situation that he had been prepared to proceed to India himself. Cornwallis had actually consented to go, when the difficulty automatically disappeared. Cornwallis did not altogether approve of the concessions made by the Board of Control and the Court of Directors, and it is recorded that he described one of the instructions that had been given to him as 'a milk-and-water order'. Had Cornwallis gone out, it would have been in the capacity of Governor-General, and he would thus have anticipated his second term of office by some eight years. Sir John Kaye has well said: 'At the call of his King and country he was ready to go out to India—as he would have gone anywhere under a strong sense of duty—but he thankfully withdrew from the mission when he was no longer bound by these loyal considerations to undertake it.'

He was next to be employed in a post that he regarded as the most difficult of any in which he had hitherto been engaged. In 1798 he was appointed Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief of Ireland. That the Government recognized the difficulties of such a post is evident from a remark Mr. Pitt made, which was to this effect: 'The Marquess Cornwallis, in accepting this office, has conferred the most essential obligation on the public which it can, perhaps, ever receive from the services of any individual.' It is no part of the scope of this sketch to give a detailed account of Cornwallis's administration of Ireland: suffice it to say that the time was one of the greatest difficulty and trouble, and that his utmost powers of tact and reconciliation were required. He had to combat a great rebellion, and in combating it, as Sir John Kaye has said, 'he was as merciful as he was resolute and courageous.' It had never been his custom to court popularity, and he did not do so now. Naturally, therefore, even he did not escape a certain amount of adverse criticism. 'In the eyes of some,' says the historian, 'it appeared as if he should have done too much, and in the eyes of others too little.' He himself has left on record his own view of



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

57
SL

The situation : 'The life of a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland comes up to my idea of perfect misery : but if I can accomplish the great object of consolidating the British Empire, I shall be sufficiently repaid.' He did his best, and the Political Union of England and Ireland, effected in 1801, was the outcome of his administration. He left Ireland the same year. During all his public anxieties, he had still found time to maintain his interest in Indian affairs. He had himself, during his tenure of high office in India, experienced so much trouble from letters of recommendation introducing persons to his notice, many of whom were undesirables, that he was always most chary of giving such letters himself. It is on record that he broke through his rule on one occasion : he gave a letter to a young officer recommending him to the attention of Sir John Shore, who was at the time Governor-General of India, it was in these terms : 'I beg leave to introduce to you Colonel Wesley, who is lieutenant-colonel of my regiment. He is a sensible man and a good officer, and will, I have no doubt, conduct himself in a manner to merit your approbation.' 'The bearer of the letter,' adds the historian, 'was Arthur Wellesley, afterwards Duke of Wellington.' Cornwallis was much gratified, during his tenure of office in Ireland, to receive from the officers of the Army that had completed the subjugation of the Mysore usurper, Tipu Sultan, the turban of that chieftain, and the sword of a Mahratta leader, together with an address, which the Army had unanimously voted him as a recognition of his own great services in the earlier campaigns.

His services were still of too valuable a character for him to be long left in peace, and on his return to England from Ireland he was at once appointed to the command of the Eastern Division of the Army : the times were critical and fears were freely expressed that England might at any moment expect invasion. The problem of National Defence was as great in those days as it is now. Cornwallis saw that in the Navy lay the only hope of the nation against successful invasion, and this, not because he was in any way a champion of what in these latter days has been called 'The Blue Water School', but because of the inadequacy, as great then as it is now, of the national



arrangements for the land defence of the country. In words that, *mutatis mutandis*, might have been used by any modern patriot, such as Earl Wemyss, who has done so much to stir England up to a proper sense of her responsibilities in this direction, Cornwallis thus wrote: 'We shall prepare for the land defence of England by much wild and capricious expenditure of money, and if the enemy should ever elude the vigilance of our wooden walls, we shall, after all, make a bad figure.' The danger, as history has recorded, passed away for the time, and at the end of 1801, Cornwallis was dispatched to France on the important mission of negotiating the Peace of Amiens. This mission he successfully accomplished, but only after a long delay, which sorely tried his patience. He had two interviews, it is recorded, with Napoleon Buonaparte, at the second of which Napoleon expressed his wish to negotiate with a certain Indian Nawab for the cession of a few leagues of territory round Pondicheri. On Cornwallis remarking that he knew of no Nawab with whom the French could treat, Napoleon replied: 'Vous êtes bien dur, milord,' 'You are too hard, my lord.' Peace was eventually signed on March 25, 1802. A picture was subsequently painted of the historic scene. 'In the background,' records the historian, 'an English officer is cordially embracing one of the French suite.' Had the painter a dim prescience that in the year of grace 1908, the friendly relations between the two great countries, England and France, would have been cemented by an entente cordiale, and that the two nations would have been mutually participating in an historic commemoration in that country in the New World where their relations, during the great War of Independence, had been marked by such generosity and courtesy on both sides, though at the time they were engaged in offensive operations one against the other?

On his return to England the same year, Cornwallis engaged for a time in the recreations of a country gentleman. He did not anticipate being called upon for further service for the State, but he was quite prepared to undertake such service, should the opportunity be placed in his way, for like all men who have been actively engaged for many



MARQUESS CORNWALLIS

59
SL

years, he felt the need of having some definite employment, and was by no means content, as he himself expressed it, 'to sit down quietly by myself without occupation or object, to contemplate the dangers of my country with the prospect of being a mere cipher, without arms in my hands.' When, therefore, the offer came to him at the end of 1804, to proceed to India a second time as Governor-General, he accepted it, but not without some misgiving and searching of heart. He himself spoke of his venture as a rash step. He was not in the best of health at the time, but, as the historian has well said, there was a difficulty, an emergency, and he felt bound to accede to the request of the Government to help them. 'It was not the enthusiasm of youth that sent him, but an irresistible sense of self-denying duty.' Only once since the time of Lord Cornwallis has it fallen to the lot of any one to be summoned twice to undertake the reins of Government in India. Lord Curzon, the late Viceroy, received this distinguished honour in recognition of his brilliant services to the State. Cornwallis arrived in India in the month of July, 1805; in the month of October of the same year he was laid to rest in his tomb at Ghazipur, a place in the Province now known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The difficult task that had been given him of a reversal of the Foreign Policy of his distinguished predecessor in office, the Marquess Wellesley, and of a reorganization of the finances of the country, had proved too great for his strength. At the time of his death he was on tour in the Upper Provinces. Cornwallis was sixty-seven when he undertook this second term of office. Mr. Seton-Karr has stated that no English statesman has ever taken office in India at so advanced an age. This is true, but there was very nearly being an instance to the contrary in these later days. It is recorded in Sir William Lee-Warner's *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Norman*, that, in the year 1893, Lord Kimberley offered Sir Henry Norman, who was at the time Governor of Queensland, the post of Viceroy of India, in succession to Lord Lansdowne. He had at first accepted the offer, after a short period of deliberation: 'But a fortnight's reflection convinced him that at his age—he was sixty-seven—he



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

ought not to undertake the responsibility. 'I cannot face the Viceroyalty,' he wrote, 'and, after much anxiety and doubt, have telegraphed accordingly. I feel that I am not equal to five years of arduous work, and I should probably break down.' Both of these great men remained true to themselves, the one in accepting, the other in declining the high office at such an advanced age. Cornwallis, as has been stated, was moved to go out by his strong sense of self-denying duty. Sir Henry Norman realized his own limitations in time, and was moved not to undertake a responsibility which he felt too great for his strength.

'With Cornwallis,' says the historian, 'there passed away one of the best and most blameless men that have ever devoted their lives to the service of their country. He was not inspired by any lofty genius, but in no man, perhaps, in the great muster-roll of English heroes, can it be truly said that there were more serviceable qualities, more sterling integrity, and a more abiding sense of public duty. For duty he lived and died. I do not know in the whole range of history a more reliable man—a man who in his time was more trusted for the safe performance of duties of a very varied character, and certainly no man did more to purify the public services of India.'



CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY INTO THE SUPREME POWER IN INDIA

MARQUESS WELLESLEY, 1760-1842

It must be a rare thing to find in one family so many distinguished men as were Richard Colley Wellesley, afterwards the first Marquess Wellesley, William Wellesley Pole, afterwards the first Baron Maryborough, Henry Wellesley, afterwards the first Baron Cowley, and Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the first Duke of Wellington. Their mother appears to have found it at times rather embarrassing that she should have been the mother of such sons, for it is recorded that being delayed one day when she was driving out, by an applauding crowd, she remarked, 'This comes of being the mother of the Gracchi.' Wellesley, as the subject of this sketch will be called throughout, to distinguish him from his brother, the great Duke, was first sent to school at Harrow, but was expelled for a boyish escapade, which serves to illustrate more than anything else the lack of discipline in the school at the time. He had joined some other boys in barring out a new head master. He was afterwards sent to Eton, for which school he entertained a life-long affection, and at his own special request, he was buried there when he died. His head master thought very highly of his scholarly attainments. It is recorded that George the Third was present on the occasion when it fell to Wellesley's lot to recite the speech made by the Earl of Strafford on the occasion of his famous trial, when he was accused of alienating the King from his subjects, and that Wellesley's presentation of his theme was so graphic that the King shed tears. The great actor, Garrick, met him soon after and said to him: 'Your lordship has done what I never could do. You have drawn tears from the King.' 'Yes,' was Wellesley's reply, 'but

RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

you never spoke before him in the character of a fallen favourite, arbitrary minister.' After a short stay at the University of Oxford, Wellesley took up for a time a Parliamentary career, sitting first in the Irish House of Peers, and afterwards in the English House of Commons. One subject which he advocated in common with William Wilberforce was the abolition of slavery throughout the British Dominions. The Speaker of the House of Commons had remarked one day to Wellesley : ' You want a wider sphere : you are dying of cramp.' With the offer made to him in 1797 of the Governor-Generalship of India, that wider sphere had come. His brother Arthur had already preceded him for his turn of military service in India, and he had had some correspondence with him ; he had also read much Indian history and in other ways had been following Indian affairs pretty closely.

Wellesley arrived in India in 1798. There was much in common between Pitt and Wellesley. Pitt had realized the necessity of checking the ascendancy of the French in America, if England was ever to expand in that portion of the world : Wellesley realized that a similar policy was necessary in India, if England was not simply to expand, but to hold any footing at all in that country. In this necessity lay the secret of much of Wellesley's policy as Governor-General. He had delivered an impassioned address from his place in the House of Commons as early as 1794, in which he had clearly laid down his views as to the general principles, designs, and power of France. He had said : ' The real cause of our present security is to be found in our own exertions. By those exertions we were able to withstand and repel the first assault of the arms and principles of France, and the continuance of the same effort now forms our only barrier against the return of the same danger.' Sir Alfred Lyall has stated as a remarkable fact that ' each repeated demonstration of France against the English Dominion in India has accelerated instead of retarding its expansion '. Wellesley saw clearly that as long as the great Native Powers of India retained European and especially French officers in their pay, and in their armies, and listened to French advice in their Councils, so long would the demonstrations of



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

63
SL

France against the British Power in India be continued. It was in his determination to end this dangerous state of things that eventually came about that inevitable collision with these great Native Powers, which resulted in that vast expansion of English influence and ascendancy in the continent of India for which his period of rule is remarkable. That the danger from the French was no mere chimera of Wellesley's imagination appears from a fact stated by Sir Alfred Lyall, that 'on the very day, in April, 1798, that Wellesley landed at Madras on his way to Calcutta, the ambassadors of one of these Native Powers, Tipu, the Ruler of Mysore, had disembarked at Mangalore on their return from the Isle of France, where the French Governor had not only given them a public reception, but had also issued a Proclamation inviting all good citizens to enrol themselves under the Mysore banner for a war to expel the English from India'. His biographer has well said: 'This was the true greatness of Wellesley, that he recognized in all their fullness alike the need and the responsibility of the expansion of British India'; and the greater part therefore of his career in India was spent in effecting that expansion. 'The political outcome of Lord Wellesley's Governor-Generalship,' writes Sir Alfred Lyall, 'is well summarized in the final paragraph of the long dispatch in which he reported to the Court of Directors, in the lofty language of a triumphant pro-consul, the general result of the wars and Treaties that he had made for the consolidation of our Eastern Empire, and the pacification of all India: "a general bond of connexion is now established between the British Government and the principal States of India, on principles which render it the interest of every State to maintain its alliance with the British Government, which precludes inordinate aggrandizement of any one of those States by an usurpation of the rights and possessions of others, and which secures to every State the unmolested exercise of its separate authority within the limits of its established dominion under the general protection of the British Power."'

The Native States that Wellesley was called upon to deal with were the tributary States of Tanjore, the Karnatik, Oudh, which was within the British sphere of influ-



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

ence, if not indeed tributary, and the independent States of Mysore, Haidarabad, and those of the great Mahratta Confederacy. The two chief centres of French intrigue and ambition at the time were Mysore and Haidarabad. The greatest danger lay in Mysore, the Ruler of which State, Tipu Sultan, had already shown his hand by making that offensive and defensive alliance with the French already referred to, which had for its professed object 'the expulsion of the British Nation from India'. Before Wellesley could deal with him, he found it necessary to come to some arrangement both with the Nizam of Haidarabad and with the Mahrattas. One of the results of the non-intervention policy, or the policy of neutrality, as one historian calls it, which had lasted from 1792 to 1798, was that the Nizam had to see his old allies stand by while he was being reduced by the Mahrattas into a position of dependence upon them. Naturally, he was now more or less disaffected towards the British, and, though comparatively weak, he still had a large and well-disciplined force under French officers; and Wellesley realized how dangerous this force might well become if it chose, as it probably would, to march over to Tipu's side in the event of hostilities between the British and that ruler. Wellesley was always able to secure the assistance of skilful and able lieutenants in carrying out his policy, and he could have made no better choice than that of John Malcolm, for the purpose of converting the Nizam of Haidarabad from a doubtful friend into a faithful ally. Malcolm's diplomacy was eminently successful; and the result was a Treaty made with the Nizam in 1798, under the terms of which all Frenchmen in his service were to be dismissed. The disbandment of the French battalions was carried out, again through the influence of Malcolm, with great skill and resolution; and the Nizam received a force in their place commanded by English officers, to be stationed permanently in his country. The basis of the Treaty was thus what is known in Indian history as the 'subsidiary system'. When Wellesley tried to effect the same arrangement with the Mahrattas, he did not find them so complacent: they were at this time the most formidable power to be reckoned with, and they were unwilling to have the



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

65
SL

thin end of the wedge of ultimate British paramountcy in their Councils introduced in the shape of an alliance under the subsidiary system. All they would agree to, therefore, was to join the league against Mysore : this was all that Wellesley could have hoped for : he had not expected their active co-operation, and he was content so long as they were prepared to maintain an attitude of benevolent neutrality. This he seemed now to have been successful in securing, and he was therefore prepared to deal with Mysore.

It had been evident for some time that Tipu had been dreaming of Empire : his great ambition was to become Emperor of Southern India. If the result of the recent neutral attitude of the British towards the Native Powers had been the weakening of the Nizam, owing to the aggrandizement of the Mahrattas, the result in Tipu's case had been the strengthening of his position, and he was now a far more formidable enemy than he had been at the time that Lord Cornwallis had concluded peace with him in 1792. The position was recognized as a dangerous one, and Wellesley, realizing that the Madras Government was not strong enough to deal with the situation, resolved on independent action, untrammelled by the opposition he might expect from divided counsels. With him to resolve was to act, and he commenced negotiations with Tipu, with the view of getting him to disarm, and abandon his alliance with the French. His first demand was couched in sufficiently conciliatory terms. Tipu's reply, however, was subtle and shuffling ; he practically denied the truth of the reports about his French alliances. The conclusion of his letter was eminently characteristic of an Oriental prince, who strives to conceal his insincerity under the guise of a studied courtesy and politeness ; 'continue to allow me,' he wrote, 'the pleasure of your correspondence, making me happy by accounts of your health.' This did not deceive Wellesley : on his way out to India he had met David Baird, afterwards General Baird, who had at one time been a prisoner in Tipu's hands ; and he had learnt much from him as to the real attitude of Tipu towards the British. Wellesley at once proceeded in person to Madras to take personal command of the operations

RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

that he now saw were inevitable. But he gave Tipu one more chance, and sent him an ultimatum. All Tipu vouchsafed in reply was the curt message : ' I am going a-hunting.' The campaign which Wellesley had now no alternative but to enter upon, ended, as history has recorded, with the capture of the great fortress of Seringapatam in 1799, the death of Tipu, and the end of the Muhammadan dynasty of Mysore. If Wellesley was fortunate in the men at his disposal in the domain of diplomacy, so was he fortunate in those whom he found ready to his hand in the sterner work of warfare. If the actual storming of the capital had been carried out under the able superintendence of General Baird, the generally successful conduct of the whole campaign was due to the presence of Wellesley's famous brother, Colonel Arthur Wellesley. Sir Alfred Lyall has said : ' Although he held only subordinate military command, his clear and commanding intellect, his energy and skill in action were displayed in the advice which he constantly gave to Lord Mornington (as Wellesley was then styled), in his able organization of all the army departments, and in the rapidly decisive operations with which he terminated the war.' The Governor-General met with his reward in the thanks voted to him in the House of Commons. ' In strange contrast,' notes the historian, ' with the hesitating and almost apologetic tone in which our position and the growth of our responsibilities had been discussed in Parliament twenty years earlier, an imperial note was sounded in no uncertain terms in the resolution recorded by the House, which ran thus : ' The Governor-General has established on a basis of permanent security the tranquillity and prosperity of the British Empire in India.' It was characteristic of that incorruptible integrity that has at all times marked the British Rulers of India, that when the Army wished to present Wellesley with the Star and Badge of the Order of St. Patrick, made from the jewels of Tipu, he declined to receive the present. Similarly, when the Company proposed to make him a present of £100,000 from the prize-money, he also declined the proposal : ' He did not wish,' it is recorded, ' to deprive the soldiers of any share in the profits of the great triumph.' Eventually, however, the Directors induced him to accept



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

67
SL

an annuity of £5,000 for twenty years, and the jewels offered by the Army. A subsequent honour he much appreciated was his appointment in 1801 as Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in the East Indies.

The campaign over, Wellesley proceeded to effect a settlement of the territories that had thus been recovered from Muhammadan usurpation. In making this settlement he had two objects in view ; in the first place a reasonable indemnity for the cost of the war had to be secured ; and in the second place, the safety of Madras from any further aggression had also to be guaranteed ; the Nizam of Haidarabad, and the Mahrattas, had to be rewarded for their support of the British in the recent operations, a support which was more nominal than actual. A commission was appointed, among the members of which were two of Wellesley's brothers. The result of the labours of this commission was a partition of the territory. Certain shares were allotted to the allies of the British. Another portion was absorbed in the British dominions ; and the remainder was constituted into a State under the old Hindu reigning family, which had been dispossessed by Haidar Ali,—‘ a politic concession,’ writes the historian, ‘ to the feelings of a population that had hated and feared Muhammadan ascendancy.’ Thus again rose the State of Mysore, larger and more compact than it had ever been in its chequered history in the past. It has again been through a chequered history almost up to the present time, but it has emerged successfully out of it, until it forms to-day a good type of a Native State, well and quietly governed. In a recent paper read by him before the Royal Society of Arts, Sir David Barr, an authority on the Native States of India, spoke of this State thus : ‘ Mysore may be acknowledged to be the model Native State of India. It had all the advantages of fifty years of British administration, but the Durbar deserves the credit of maintaining the standard of government then introduced, and of carrying out many measures of progress, such as the development of mineral resources, the expansion of railways, and the promotion of industries and trade. The present Maharaja is a young chief of charming personality ; he has received an excellent education, and, since his accession to power,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

has given proofs of his desire to rule his State with prudence, and for the benefit of his subjects.'

Wellesley's policy in connexion with the tributary States had as its basis his desire to get rid of dual control with its attendant evils. 'He was not actuated,' writes the historian, 'by any love of acquisition or of aggression, but by the keen desire of the wise administrator for responsible and undivided Government.' The two principal States whose Government he thus reorganized were the Karnatik, which was perhaps the most important of the tributary States, and Tanjore. The Nawabs of the Karnatik had continually violated the understanding entered into between them and the British Government in 1792. They had further been intriguing with the rulers of Mysore against the British Power. They had, moreover, failed to pay the subsidy agreed on under the original settlement in return for British protection, and by that settlement, cession of a portion of territory was to be the penalty of non-fulfilment of this portion of the contract. After protracted negotiations which resulted in no satisfactory result, Wellesley resolved that the only course left open to him was the practical annexation of the Karnatik. A Treaty was made in 1801 with the then Nawab, under the terms of which the complete civil and military administration of the country was vested in the Company. Thus the direct control of the British Government was substituted for the old and unsatisfactory indirect control, with considerable advantage to the prosperity of the country, and to its security from outside aggression. The case of Tanjore was one of disputed succession: it was a legacy left by his predecessors in office. The Pandits of the country had been consulted, as also had the famous Danish Missionary, Schwartz, who had an intimate acquaintance with many of the intricate problems of the day: they had, one and all, given their opinion in favour of an adopted son of the late Raja, one Sarboji, but great delay had occurred in giving effect to their decision. Wellesley settled the matter in his masterful way by making a Treaty with Sarboji, thus virtually deciding in his favour. At the same time this Treaty vested the entire administration of Tanjore in the Company's Government, and again with marked and



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

GL
89

beneficial effect upon the happiness and prosperity of the country. Sarboji appears to have been a remarkable personality: he had been indebted to Schwartz for his education, and had grown up to be an able and cultivated man. Bishop Heber, who met him some years later, has described him as 'one of the most singularly gifted and accomplished persons he had ever known, being able to quote Lavoisier and Linnaeus fluently, to appreciate fine distinctions of character in Shakespeare, to write fair English verse, and withal to hold his own with cavalry officers in judging the points of a horse, or killing a tiger at long range'. The writer knows a young Maharaja in the present day of whom, *mutatis mutandis*, a similar description might be given, with the exception that he would not be content with killing a tiger at long range. He prefers to be at close quarters with his game, and he is in the constant habit of going after such big game on foot with his rifle and a plucky bull-terrier as his only companions. Wellesley adopted the same policy towards Surat that he had towards the Karnatik and Tanjore. He recognized its importance as the centre of maritime commerce, and he took it under British control.

The case of Oudh, which was the next most important State that Wellesley had to deal with, was a more complex problem. The great dangers of the time were a threatened invasion of Zaman Shah, the ruler of Afghanistan, into Hindustan, aggression on the part of the Mahrattas, and a new feature in Indian history, movements of the Sikhs. Oudh had become, therefore, of immense strategical importance. Warren Hastings had been content to make a buffer State of it. The circumstances of Wellesley's time would not allow of its remaining such. The Nawab Vizier of Oudh was not a sufficiently strong ruler to be trusted to ward off invasion from any of these great Powers from the districts contiguous to Oudh, which practically formed part of his possessions, the Doab to the south, and the Province of Rohil-Khand to the north. Wellesley realized that if once an invader got a footing in these districts, it would not be long before Oudh would fall, and the dominions of the Company would be in dire peril of falling also before the successful invader. Herein, then, lay the secret of his



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

policy towards Oudh. He determined that, if possible, Oudh should be brought within the States that recognized the supreme control of the Company in their administration, civil and military, or that, failing the acquiescence of the Nawab in such a practical surrender of Government, for such an arrangement would of course mean that he might continue to reign, but not to rule, the Nawab should cede to the Company the two outlying provinces of the Doab and Rohil-Khand, a cession which would have the effect of enveloping Oudh by the British Dominions. He had anticipated no difficulty in getting the Nawab to agree to the former of these alternatives, as he had already offered to abdicate his throne. This offer, however, he had subsequently withdrawn; and as he seemed disinclined to agree to either alternative, Wellesley dispatched his brother, Henry, to his court to press upon him compliance with one alternative or another, and followed this up by proceeding himself towards the Nawab's capital. Only when the Governor-General's state barge had entered the Gumti did the Nawab agree to the second alternative; a Treaty was accordingly signed ceding in perpetuity the Doab and Rohil-Khand to the British. Wellesley continued his journey to Lucknow and treated the Nawab with all due courtesy and respect. He left his brother Henry in charge of the administration of the new territories. The Directors had not been altogether pleased at his placing an officer who was not a member of their service in charge, but Wellesley was able to report thus of his brother's short period of administration: 'To his direction, address, and firmness, the Company is principally indebted for the early and tranquil settlement of these extensive and fertile territories.' Henry Wellesley, it may be noted, scrupulously refrained from accepting any emoluments beyond those of his post as private secretary to the Governor-General. Wellesley also exerted himself to assist the Nawab in purifying his own administration of Oudh; and in doing so made himself many enemies among the large class of European adventurers who flooded the country, by expelling all those not properly accredited. Of the results of the Governor-General's policy, one of his biographers has written: 'Wellesley found Oudh a pressing and un-



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

GL

mistakable danger to the British position in India : he left it a safeguard and a support.'

The frontiers of British India were now contiguous to those of the Mahratta chieftain, Scindia ; and now a still more complex problem began to confront Wellesley. He had written to the Directors in these terms : 'The only remaining Native Powers of importance now remaining in India, independent of British protection, are the confederate Mahratta States.' The Mahratta chieftains had hitherto been strongly opposed to the idea of coming under British protection, and though the nominal head of the great Mahratta Confederacy, the Peshwa, had from time to time been approached on the subject of a subsidiary Treaty, he had evaded all overtures on the subject. This had been very largely due to the influence of the great Brahman Minister, Nana Farnavis, who, as long as he was alive, was supreme in the Councils of the Puna branch of the Mahratta Confederacy, and was always strenuously opposed to European control. Of this great man, Grant Duff, the historian of the Mahratta Annals, has written : 'He respected the English, he admired their sincerity, and the vigour of their Government, but as political enemies, no one regarded them with more jealousy and alarm.' If he held a high opinion of the British, they for their part had an equally high opinion of him. The then British Resident at Puna wrote, with reference to his death : 'With him has departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Mahratta Government.' The most powerful chieftains at this time were Scindia, and Holkar, and the Bhonsla. The Mahrattas had commenced scrambling for power amongst themselves. In the course of this struggle, the Peshwa, Baji Rao, found himself driven from his capital, and was obliged to solicit help from the English. Wellesley had long realized the all-importance to the British position in India of an ascendancy in the Councils of the Mahratta Empire. This was now his opportunity. In 1802 he concluded a Treaty, known in history as the Treaty of Bassein, with the Peshwa, under the subsidiary system ; and he authorized his brother, Arthur Wellesley, to escort the chief back to his capital ; at the same time he notified the other great Mahratta chieftains that their



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

central Government had been taken under British protection. Of the importance of this Treaty, one writer has said: 'Previously to the Treaty, there existed a British Empire in India: the Treaty, by its direct or indirect operations, gave the Company the Empire of India.' General Arthur Wellesley described one special article in this Treaty, whereby all the foreign relations of the Peshwa were to be subordinated to the policy of England, as 'The bond of peace to India'. Sir John Malcolm, who took a large share in negotiating this Treaty, also spoke of it thus: 'The result of the Treaty was seen in the dawn of tranquillity, prosperity and peace.'

But it was to be peace only through war. The other Mahratta chiefs refused to be bound by the Treaty. They realized, as the historian has well said, that 'The submission of the Peshwa to the British was the sure beginning of the last fight of the Mahrattas for existence'. The first to move were Scindia and the Bhonsla: Holkar was content for the time to wait upon events. The war that thus ensued is known in history as the Second Mahratta War: it lasted in its two phases for a period of two years from 1802 to 1804. Again the Governor-General was fortunate in his lieutenants. While General Arthur Wellesley crushed the forces of Scindia and the Bhonsla at Assaye and at Argaum in the south, General Lord Lake won the victories of Laswari and Delhi in the north. Both in the south and the north these great commanders had to encounter highly disciplined forces, the result of the training of the distinguished Frenchmen in Mahratta service, Generals de Boigne and Perron, and victory was only won after a very hard struggle. The victory of Delhi was of special importance, as it placed the old Mogul Emperor, Shah Alam, again under British protection. Sir Alfred Lyall has stated that in thus assuming charge of the person and family of the Mogul Emperor, Wellesley inaugurated a significant change of policy. 'For at least forty years the imperial sign manual had been at the disposal of any adventurer or usurper who could occupy the capital, overawe the powerless court, and dictate his own investiture with some lofty office, or with a grant of the Provinces that he had appropriated. Wellesley now formally re-



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

73

announced any intention of using the royal prerogative as a pretext for asserting English claims to ascendancy over feudatories, or to the exercise of rulership. Henceforth the representatives of the Moguls were relegated to the position of State pensioners, with royal rank and an ample pension. This arrangement lasted for fifty years, until it was suddenly extinguished in 1857, when the storm raised by the Sepoy Mutiny swept away the last relics of the Mogul throne and dynasty.' The end of the war came with the decisive defeat of Holkar, who had proved a very active and troublesome enemy, at Dig, in 1804. Treaties had already been made with Scindia and the Bhonsla at the end of 1803, and after Lake's flying columns had surprised and dispersed Holkar's bands, that chieftain, who had taken refuge in the Punjab, returned and signed a Treaty on similar terms. But Wellesley was not satisfied that he had disposed of Mahratta pretensions for all time, and had he only been left a free hand at this juncture to complete his task, it is probable that the great problem of English relations with the Mahrattas might have been solved once and for all, instead of being left for the solution of the Marquess of Hastings.

As it was, however, the political and geographical results of Wellesley's operations were great. Before the campaign with the Mahrattas, he had declared it as his intention 'to accomplish the complete consolidation of the British Empire in India, and the future tranquillity of Hindustan'. And he had gone far on the road to accomplish this. 'He had certainly succeeded,' says Sir Alfred Lyall, 'in establishing beyond the possibility of future opposition the political and military superiority of the English throughout India.' And the same writer has clearly shown that from this period may be dated the substantial formation of the three Indian Presidencies. 'Between 1799 and 1804, the partition of Mysore, the lapse of Tanjore, the cessions from Haidarabad, the transfer of the whole of the Karnatik to the Company, brought large and fertile tracts within the administrative circle of Madras, and constituted it the head quarters of a large Government in South India. In Western India the Bombay Presidency, which had hitherto been almost entirely confined to the seaboard,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

and whose principal importance had been derived from its harbour and trading mart, now acquired valuable districts in Guzerat, and the influence of its Government rose to undisputed predominance throughout the adjoining Native States. In North India the Mahrattas had lost all power : the important Province of Bandel-Khand had been brought entirely under British influence and partly under British rule. The ceded and conquered districts obtained from Oudh and from Scindia were settling down under our regular administration. The Presidency of Calcutta, which now extended from the Bay of Bengal, north-westward to the Himalayas and the Punjab frontier, became henceforward the centre and the chief controlling power of a vast dominion, directly ruling over the richest and most populous region of India, indirectly imposing its presence over every other State, or group of chiefships, south of the Sutlej river, drawing them all within its orbit and enveloping them all within the external bounds of its sovereignty. The only Indian rulerships completely outside the sphere of this paramount influence were those which occupied the Punjab (where the Sikh power was now drawing to a head), the country along the Indus river, and the mountains of Nipal.

With the great Empire that had now been won in India, a new race of administrators was rising up. Wellesley's own ideal of the man who was required at the head of affairs was that 'he should always be a Peer of the Realm, it being absolutely necessary that he should be a person of high rank, if not conversant in Indian affairs, which is most desirable, at least well accustomed to public business'. He realized also the absolute necessity of a well-trained body of men to carry on the work of administration under the supreme Ruler, which the new state of things had made a more important and responsible duty than it had ever been before. He himself had written to the Directors, when he was urging the necessity of a change in the methods of training these young officers, in these terms : 'They are no longer simply agents of a commercial concern, but the ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign. From merchants they had become statesmen : from traders, magistrates, ambassadors, governors, and



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

GL
75

judges.' A writer has well said : 'The figure which a returned civilian cuts in the literature of the early part of the nineteenth century suggests a very different training from that which has given us the stern self-repression and devotion to duty, the philanthropy and zeal of our own day.' If Lord Cornwallis, in completion of the work of Clive and Warren Hastings, had succeeded in creating an incorruptible body of public servants in India, the result of Wellesley's efforts to promote the training of the young officers, who were being sent out to India under his administration, was the creation of a class of public servants second to none in the world for capacity and zeal. If men who have won a great place for themselves in the world's history have been called Plutarch's men, certainly in India to be known as one of Wellesley's men was a sure guarantee of integrity, ability, and high-minded zeal for the public interests ; and long is the muster-roll of distinguished men in the history of India who have owed their successful careers to the training and example of the great pro-consul. The Directors were unable to sanction in its entirety the magnificent scheme which Wellesley launched in Calcutta, where he founded a college modelled in the matter of discipline, residence, and government on the English Universities ; but his scheme was afterwards sanctioned in a modified form for the benefit of the Bengal officers only, and solely for their instruction in the Oriental languages, a feature in the education of officers destined for the public service of India on which Wellesley always laid the greatest stress. It has sometimes been alleged against the great Rulers of India, mainly because of the neutral attitude which they were obliged to take up with reference to the religions of the country, that they had practically renounced their own religion. This is so far from being true, to take the case of Wellesley as a representative one, that it is recorded of him that he made special provision for the appointment of a clergyman as provost of his new college, whose business it was to be, besides confirming the students in principles of the Christian religion, to superintend and regulate their general morals and conduct, and to assist them with his advice and admonition. Moreover, while ordering complete and unfettered



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

toleration for the religions of the land, and observing and ordering to be observed an attitude of strict neutrality towards them, he himself took every opportunity, as his biographer has recorded, 'to stand forth decisively as a Christian Governor.' After the conquest of Mysore, he ordered a Public Thanksgiving Service, and he himself attended it in state. He has indeed summed up his own attitude in this connexion in a speech he made before a committee of the House of Commons, on the occasion of the inquiry that preceded the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1813. He had then said : 'He had thought it his duty to have the Scriptures translated into the languages of the East, and to give the learned Natives employed in the translation the advantages of access to the sacred fountains of Divine Truth. He thought that a Christian Governor could not have done less, and he knew that a British Governor could not do more.'

At the outset of his administration, Wellesley had been confronted with problems that must be faced by all Makers of Empire. He had to arrange for the security of his dominions from external aggression, and for the maintenance of peace and security within the borders of those dominions. For the protection of his northern frontiers, he made an alliance with Persia, with the special view of checkmating the ambition of the Afghan ruler, Zaman Shah, and the suspected designs of France and Russia. In order to safeguard the south of his dominions from anticipated French aggression, he actively intervened in the Egyptian campaign against Napoleon Buonaparte, and invited the co-operation of certain Arab chiefs to help him to expel the French from the East ; he received from the Sultan of Turkey 'the Order of the Crescent of the first rank', as a mark of gratitude for his assistance. He planned the capture of Mauritius, but the unwillingness of the English Admiral to move without his sovereign's express orders prevented this being effected. He proposed that Ceylon should be formally annexed to the Crown, and placed under the control of the Indian Government. As it was, Ceylon was not formally annexed to the Crown till 1815 ; and was wholly removed from the Company's control. When the Peace of Amiens was signed in 1802, he



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

CSL

foresaw that it was only a temporary truce, and refused to carry out the orders of the Home Government to hand back their possessions in India to the French authorities, with the result that his prescience was justified ; war broke out again within a short six months. His measures for defence also included the security of the coast-line by adequate fortifications. He also elaborated a scheme for a system of fortifications for the protection of the north-west frontier ; and recommended a substantial increase in the military establishment of India, especially in the direction of increasing the number of British troops. Considering the vastness of Wellesley's military operations in India, it is curious to read that he at no time had more than 14,000 British troops at his disposal. He wished to see this force raised to a strength of at least 30,000. Financial considerations weighed heavily with the Company at this period. Besides this the Directors had not even yet fully realized the imperial destiny of their race, and they wrote out in reply to his first proposals : ' Our present creed with regard to India is that nothing new is to be attempted without weighing well every rupee it will cost.' Wellesley found himself compelled altogether to ignore an order sent out by the Directors that the military forces in India were to be reduced. The Company at length agreed to a greater military establishment, but the increase they voted was mainly one of Indian troops, and this they only did through the persistency of Wellesley backed up as it was by the views of General Arthur Wellesley. One grave defect Wellesley had pointed out was the disproportion of Indian to European troops : this still remained a political danger, and only the events of the great Mutiny of 1857 eventually proved the unwisdom of the policy that had induced it.

It has been said of Wellesley, that he was a statesman first, then a soldier, a diplomatist and a financier. He had already shown his quality in the domain of statesmanship, war, and diplomacy, he also showed it in the realm of finance and commerce. Again, he was fortunate in his agent ; his financial commissioner was Mr. Tucker ; he it was who elaborated a plan which led to the creation of a general bank at Calcutta. It speaks well for the con-

confidence that the vigour of Wellesley's administration had inspired in the classes who have the command of capital that the credit of the Government never stood higher than it did during his régime. Wellesley held very sound views on the subject of commerce. At this period all Indian trade was a monopoly of the Company, and indeed it remained so for many years after Wellesley: he would have liked to see an expansion of private trade, but the times were hardly ripe. The Directors thought they detected in his proposals what was long their bugbear, Free Trade: and one of the Directors remarked, 'Free Trade with India would depopulate Great Britain.' Among other subjects to which Wellesley devoted some attention was agriculture: he was the first Ruler to see the advantage of experimental farms, which are such a marked feature of modern administration in this important department. Not once or twice only during his career was Wellesley destined to come into collision with the Court of Directors. Not only matters of high policy, but smaller matters also, as they might have appeared to persons not particularly observant, provided plenty of scope for difference of opinion between them. Indeed, the occasions when they mutually disagreed were so many that one writer has described the attitude of the Directors towards Wellesley as 'an attitude halting between admiration and displeasure'. In one matter especially, Wellesley, as became the high-minded Ruler, conscious of his rectitude, resented the tenacity with which the Directors clung to their right of patronage. Mill has admitted that 'Wellesley has seldom been surpassed in the skill with which he made choice of his agents'. He had always exercised what patronage he had it in his power to exercise with the very highest idea of his responsibility: in this matter, as his biographer has stated, he was 'absolutely and unswervingly honourable, scorning the faintest suspicion of favouritism or influence'. And all his great contemporaries had recognized that 'merit and capacity to serve were the only recommendations to which Wellesley paid attention'. Naturally a man of his temperament resented, not only the interference of the Company in his appointments, but still more keenly any suspicion of undue partiality: in one case that had occurred,



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

SL

when doubts had been thrown on his impartiality, he is recorded to have stigmatized the conduct of the Directors as 'the most direct, marked, and disgusting indignity that could be devised and as highly offensive and disgusting to every sentiment of his mind'. Wellesley never had any difficulty in finding language to express his annoyance, whatever might be the occasion. Thus it is recorded that when Mr. Pitt conferred upon him an Irish Marquisate, Wellesley wrote in terms of indignant protest: 'What am I to do with this gilded potato? There has been nothing Pinchbeck in my conduct: there should be nothing Pinchbeck in my reward.' On two occasions at least Wellesley took the step of resigning office, but on each occasion he was prevailed on to stay. The Directors still, however, continued their criticism of his actions in all departments. Probably no man in India was more pleased than Wellesley himself when at last the Directors, alarmed at the financial prospect before them of his policy of continual advance and expansion, decided to appoint a successor who should reverse that policy. So it came about that Lord Cornwallis was appointed to succeed him. Lord Cornwallis arrived in India for his second term of office in July, 1805, and Wellesley finally left the country in August.

The chief appointment that Wellesley held after his return to England was that of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. He held office for seven years, from 1821 to 1828. He is said to have been accorded a magnificent reception when he arrived in Dublin: this, it is recorded, was partly accounted for by the fact that he was regarded as the harbinger of conciliation, but mainly because he and his brother, the Duke of Wellington, were regarded as the two greatest of living Irishmen. The spirit in which he took up his new office may be seen in the speech he made on the occasion of his first public appearance. 'I have been called upon to serve my Sovereign and my country in various stations, and in distant climates: wherever my lot has been cast I have endeavoured not to disgrace my family or my country. Now, if under the favour of my Gracious Sovereign and of Divine Providence, I should be enabled to restore peace and concord to Ireland, my public career will be closed with happiness, honour, and



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

genuine glory.' It often happens in that distressful country that the man who is sent out on an errand of peace and goodwill finds himself confronted with forces set in motion by those whose designs are incompatible with an era of happiness and contentment, such as a mission of peace and goodwill might be supposed to induce, and finds it necessary, as the only effective way of repressing the terrorism which such men set up, to exchange a policy of conciliation for one of coercion. So Wellesley found : in order to keep in check the conspirators and secret societies that were disturbing the peace of the country, he had to exchange the soft word of diplomacy for the big stick of force. The results of his work in Ireland have thus been summarized by the historian : 'His work was not showy, but it was pre-eminently the work that Ireland needed, and through him the Irish administration received an impress which it ought never to have lost.'

Wellesley had always been a man of letters, and while in India he had encouraged the learned Pandits of Bengal, and had ever been an admirer of the great Literatures of the East. During the last years of his life, when he was content to live in dignified leisure, he published several poems in Latin and in English, which had been written at different periods of his active career. The motto he attached to the work was not only characteristic of the man, but practically prophetic : 'Grant me, O Goddess of Fortune, an honourable old age, with a sound body and a sound mind and not wanting fame.' The people of England had always recognized his great work, and he had the satisfaction at the last to receive a handsome recognition of it from his former masters, the Directors of the Company. The publication of his Indian dispatches showed them what they owed to him—nothing less than the creation of an Empire. They ordered a number of copies to be distributed in India, and at the same time they wrote to him that they were convinced that the dispatches had been made public in the same spirit in which they had been composed, namely, 'An ardent zeal to promote the well-being of India, and to uphold the interests and honour of the British Empire.' They further voted him a sum of money, and resolved that a marble statue of him should



MARQUESS WELLESLEY

GL
81

be placed in the India House as 'a public, conspicuous and permanent mark of the admiration and gratitude of the East India Company'. Wellesley acknowledged the honours thus conferred upon him in characteristic language : 'My first emotion was to offer up my thankful acknowledgements to the Almighty Power which has preserved my life beyond the ordinary limits of human nature, to receive a distinction of which history affords so few, if any, examples. May the memorial by which you are pleased to distinguish my services remind you of the source from which they proceed and of the ends to which they were directed, and confirm the principles of public virtue, the maxims of public order, and a due respect for just and honest Government.' The great Marquess died in 1842 at the age of eighty-two, and at his own request was buried at Eton. His best epitaph would be the words which the great Duke uttered when he heard of his brother's death : 'There is a great man gone.'

The address which the English residents of Calcutta presented to him on the eve of his departure from India best sums up the great work that the first Marquess Wellesley did for India : 'The events of the last seven years have marked the period of your Government as the most important Epoch in the history of European power in India. Your discernment in seeing the exigencies of the country, and of the times in which you were called to act, the promptitude and determination with which you have seized on the opportunities of acting, your first conception and masterly use of our intrinsic strength, have eminently contributed in conjunction with the zeal, the discipline and the courage of our armies, to decide upon these great events, and to establish, from one extremity of this Empire to the other, the ascendancy of the British name and dominion.'



CHAPTER III

THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF THE MAHRATTA
POWERS

MARQUESS OF HASTINGS, 1754-1826

THE subject of this sketch was first Lord Rawdon, and then the Earl of Moira in the Irish Peerage ; for the sake of continuity he will be designated in these pages the Marquess of Hastings. He was educated at Harrow, and his visit to his old school on his return to England after his distinguished career as Governor-General of India was long remembered there ; the Marquess Dalhousie, who was a boy at Harrow at the time, has recorded the indelible impression it left upon his mind for many reasons, and not alone on account of Hastings's princely generosity in bestowing a couple of sovereigns on every boy at the school. From Harrow Hastings proceeded to the University of Oxford, not so much to obtain any academic distinction as for the social advantages life at the University brings with it ; and he took no degree. A continental tour gave the finishing touch to his education, and he thus obtained that acquaintance with the world that every man of affairs is bound to acquire. His preferences were in favour of a military career ; and he obtained a commission as ensign in the Army at the age of seventeen, while, indeed, he was still at the University. Two years later he became a lieutenant in the 5th Foot, and at once proceeded to America to join his regiment. He remained in that country for eight years ; thus he came in for a share in the American War of Independence, and won renown for his gallantry in action in the opening battle of the campaign at Bunker's Hill, where he had two bullets through his cap. The general in command wrote to the British Government in these terms : ' Lord Rawdon has this day stamped his fame for life.' While in America he succeeded in raising a regiment known as ' The Volunteers of Ireland '. The



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

83

command of such a regiment naturally required qualities of no common order, and that Hastings possessed these is shown by the fact that the regiment greatly distinguished itself under his leadership. In 1775 he had become a captain in the 63rd Foot; and he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in 1778, and appointed Adjutant-General of the Forces in America the same year. He was able to show his quality when holding an independent command, as he did on one occasion, when he was pitted against the American general, Greene, whom his countrymen thought to be second only to Washington himself. Lord Cornwallis is recorded to have described the victory which Hastings won over this general, whose force was far superior in numbers, as by far the most splendid of the war. On account of ill-health, he was compelled to leave America before the war came to an end, in 1781. The ship by which he was proceeding home was captured by a French cruiser and taken to Brest, and thus Hastings became for a time a prisoner of war; but he was soon exchanged for some French prisoners, and returned to England. He was only twenty-eight when he was promoted in 1782 to be full colonel; he was at the same time appointed an aide de camp to the King. As a military commander he had the reputation of being a strict martinet.

In 1783, Hastings was created an English peer under the style of Baron Rawdon of Rawdon in the County of York, and thus became entitled to a seat in the English House of Lords; hitherto he had had a seat in the Irish House of Commons. He was never a very keen Parliamentary, though he was credited with the ambition of forming an independent party. On the death of his father in 1793, he became Earl of Moira in the Irish peerage. In 1794, having attained the rank of major-general, he was sent to Flanders in command of a force of 10,000 men to assist in extricating the Duke of York from his difficulties. By what was really a brilliant piece of bluff on his part, he succeeded in executing a movement from Ostend, whereby he was able to effect a junction with the Duke, though his route had lain through a country occupied by the enemy. He was complimented by an Austrian general in these terms: 'You have known, my Lord, how to do the impos-



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

sible.' It had, however, been an expensive operation, for he had adopted a ruse to deceive the enemy as to his real numbers and had thus been able to avert an attack. He had ordered rations to be collected for 25,000 men, though he had only 10,000 with him. The ruse had succeeded, and the French general refrained from attacking him on the march. The British Government, however, refused to pay for the extra 15,000 rations, and the contractor was referred for payment to Hastings. As long as he lived, he steadily refused to pay, but his widow, Lady Hastings, was afterwards made to pay the whole sum claimed. Hastings was not again engaged on active service in the field in Europe. He took up his work again in Parliament and especially interested himself in Irish affairs. In 1803, he had a term of military duty as Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, in which capacity he made himself exceedingly popular. Owing to the zeal and ability he displayed, coupled with singleness of purpose and firmness of will, in certain delicate negotiations with which the Prince Regent had entrusted him, he attracted the attention of the Ministry of the day; and, a vacancy having occurred in the office of Governor-General of India, through the resignation of Lord Minto, he was appointed to fill it in the year 1813. He left England in the spring of that year and landed at Calcutta in the month of October.

The great work of consolidation of Empire in India which the Marquess Wellesley had inaugurated, had been abruptly stopped when that great Ruler left India for good. British influence had indeed been extended over a very large portion of the country, and England stood nominal Suzerain of the whole peninsula. But a long period had intervened between the departure of Wellesley and the arrival of Hastings, during which the British Government had drawn back from any further expansion of the Empire, and had retired within its own administrative borders, 'content,' writes Sir Alfred Lyall, 'to transact in future its political affairs upon the principle of limited liability, and to maintain, outside its actual obligations, the attitude of a placid spectator, unconcerned with the quarrels or misfortunes of its neighbours.' Certain States, it is true, were left within the sphere of British influence, but there was a vast region



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

85
SL

where this influence had hardly penetrated, the immense tract of Central India, thrust in, as it were, as a double wedge, into the very centre of the Empire. This region had become what has been aptly styled a political Alsatia, full of brigands and roving banditti. Almost all Central India, including Rajputana, had been left to take care of itself. 'All round our territories,' writes the historian, 'we had a cordon of rigid, irresistible order. While outside this ring-fence, in the great interior region that contained the principalities of the Mahratta families, and of the ancient Rajput chiefs, we allowed a free hand to Scindia, Holkar, and the predatory leaders.' How bad the condition of things was may be gathered from a remonstrance which some of the Rajput States had presented to the British Government. They said that some Power in India had always existed to which peaceable States submitted, and in return obtained its protection against the invasions of upstart chiefs and the armies of lawless banditti; that the British Government now occupied the place of that protecting Power, and was the natural guardian of weak States, which were continually exposed to the cruelties and oppression of robbers and plunderers, owing to the refusal of the British Government to protect them.' They could not understand a Government that had occupied the imperial place, but yet evaded the imperial obligation.

A graphic picture of the condition of this great central tract of India has been given by the pen of the historian. 'The great central tract of the Indian continent, presented truly a pitiable spectacle, and never before had there been such intense and general suffering. The Native States were disorganized and society on the very verge of dissolution; the people were crushed by despots and ruined by exactions; the country was over-run by bandits, and its resources wasted by enemies: armed forces existed only to plunder, to torture, and to mutiny. Briefly, Government there was none; it had ceased to exist; there remained only misery and oppression.' When it stands on record that villagers burned their homesteads, and preferred to perish in the flames with their wives and children, to falling into the hands of the bands of freebooters; and that hundreds of women threw themselves into wells to avoid the same fate,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

the picture of misery and desolation called up is complete. It was indeed such a realm of anarchy as the great English poet, Milton, might have pictured King Chaos rejoicing to rule over. Lord Cornwallis had faithfully inaugurated the new policy. Sir George Barlow had carried it on; and he had actually withdrawn from every kind of relation with the Native States to which the British Government was not strictly bound by Treaty. The Directors, it is recorded, would have liked him to go even further than this, but fortunately he had realized in time that to accede to their wishes would have been to undo the work of the Marquess Wellesley, and to abdicate the position of supremacy which he had with such difficulty gained. Lord Minto, with wise prescience, had steered clear between a policy of non-intervention and the sacrifice of former prestige and national interests. He had laid it down as an established principle that 'no extent of concession or territorial restitution on the part of the British Government would have the effect of establishing any real or effectual balance of power in India, or forbearance on the part of other States when the means of aggrandizement was placed in their hands.' Before Hastings had taken up the task of the administration of India he had distrusted the judgement of the man on the spot, and had himself been a strong advocate of the policy of non-interference. Politicians in England, indeed, as Sir Alfred Lyall has clearly shown, defended the principle of non-interference on the ground that all the jarring and complicated elements of disorder that they acknowledged did exist, would gradually settle down and become fused into strong and solidly constituted States. But it soon became manifest, as has been well said, that an attempt to confine epidemic disease within fixed areas in the midst of some populous country would be not much more unreasonable than the plan of allowing political disorders to breed and multiply in the centre of India. And now that Hastings had himself become the man on the spot, he realized this, and completely changed his attitude; and so it came about that his administration proved to be the natural sequel of that of his most distinguished predecessor in the art of Empire-making, the Marquess Wellesley, and equally involved an era of conquest and reconstruction.



From what has been said it will be seen that no light problems confronted Hastings from the outset. The task of creating an ordered Government in the place of the anarchy prevailing in Central India would alone have taxed all the energies and statesmanship for some years to come of the most energetic Ruler; but this was not the only problem which had been left for his solution. He has himself stated that, 'he began his term of office with no less than five hostile discussions with Native Powers, each capable of entailing a resort to arms.' Already during his predecessor's rule the mountaineers of Nipal, who had established a Ghurka dynasty on the southern slopes of the Himalayas overlooking Bengal so recently as 1768, had been taking advantage of the apparent complacency and quiescence of their British neighbours to encroach on British territory. Sir George Barlow had contented himself with remonstrances. Lord Minto had demanded their withdrawal, but he had left India before their reply was received. Hastings had repeated the order; it had been the very first matter that had claimed his attention after his assumption of office. The Nipalese had apparently obeyed, and it seemed as if the incident had been closed. It proved to be only a ruse on their part, however, to enable them to prepare for a war they had already determined on; and in 1814 they came down from their hills again, and audaciously seized two British districts. Their only answer to Hastings's peremptory order to evacuate was an open attack upon certain British frontier posts, and the slaughter of British police. The period of grace was over, and war could no longer be avoided. It lasted practically over two years. The great British general was Sir David Ochterlony, and the Ghurka commander, Amar Singh; the latter has been described as a brave and distinguished soldier. He had been originally opposed to carrying matters to the issue of war; but once it had been begun, he opposed all proposals for coming to terms with the British until all hope of further successful resistance disappeared, when the British succeeded in penetrating within the hills, and had driven the Ghurkas from all their positions in the west of Nipal. Peace was finally signed at Segowlie in 1816. By the terms of the Treaty the Province of Kumaon on the west of Nipal was

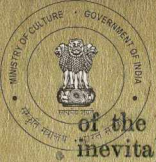


RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

acquired by the British; and thus 'the British frontiers were carried up to and beyond the watershed of the highest mountains separating India from Tibet, or from Kathay: and the English Dominion thus became conterminous for the first time with the Chinese Empire.' Sir Alfred Lyall has indeed recorded that China, 'whose Government has ever since observed our proceedings with marked and intelligible solicitude,' had a word to say on this occasion. The Chinese Government suggested that the British Resident should not be allowed to remain at Khatmandu. When Hastings suggested that a Mandarin should be sent there instead, they said no more about it. The conciliatory tact and judgement which Hastings displayed in the negotiations for the conclusion of peace with Nipal, had the most beneficial results in the maintenance by Nipal of that peaceful attitude which has characterized the relations of the country towards the British Government ever since, though the country still remains practically a *terra incognita* to the Englishman. Hastings received as his reward the thanks of the Court of Directors, and a Marquisate from the British Government. Both Houses of Parliament, moreover, unanimously passed a vote of thanks 'for his judicious arrangements in the plan and direction of the military operations in Nipal'.

Not too soon had peace been signed. The protracted campaign had been having a bad effect on the attitude of the Mahrattas in Central India. The Pathan chieftain, Amir Khan, 'that notable military adventurer,' as Sir Alfred Lyall has described him, 'who was living upon Rajputana with a compact and in a way disciplined army of some 30,000 men and a strong artillery,' was now beginning to bestir himself in the execution of his long-cherished plan of carving out a dominion for himself. The Sikhs, moreover, under Ranjit Singh, were becoming restless, and their Maharaja was reported to be assembling an army at Lahore. Though Hastings was fully aware of the necessity of cutting out the cancer that was eating into the very life of the people of Central India, he was unable to make all his arrangements for doing so until he had overcome the reluctance of the Directors to embark on another career of expansion. They and he alike knew that the suppression



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

89
SL

of the robber bands that were doing such mischief would inevitably have to be followed by a complete change in the condition of things prevailing in the central tracts of the country, a change which would mean an entire reform in the lands now subject to Mahratta influence; and that the Mahratta Powers would one and all have to be brought to recognize the Imperial supremacy of England once and for all time. It was this knowledge that operations, having for their object the extirpation of the bands of freebooters, would embroil the British Government with the great Mahratta Houses, that was the main secret of the unwillingness of the Court of Directors to sanction even the commencement of operations against them. And the Directors went so far as to suggest to Hastings that he should enter into negotiations with some of these bands, with the idea of setting up a rivalry between them, which should end in their mutual extirpation by a species of civil war. It was a Machiavellian policy which Hastings rejected with scorn. 'The Company,' he wrote, 'had forgotten the brutal and atrocious qualities of these wretches, and I am confident that nothing would have been more repugnant to the feelings of the Honourable Company than the notion that the Government should be soiled by a procedure which was to bear the colour of a confidential intercourse with any of these gangs.' Hastings well knew the rocks ahead. It was not only a question of dispersing a band of brigands, but the uprooting of a system which had taken deep root in the Native States. As Sir Alfred Lyall has said: 'It cannot be doubted that these hordes maintained a secret understanding with the independent Mahratta Rulers of Puna, Nagpur, and Gwalior, who were not particularly anxious to join in the suppression of armed bodies that spared Mahratta districts while they harried British lands, and the Nizam's country, and who probably remembered that in any future attempt to make head against British domination, the Pindaris might prove very serviceable auxiliaries.' Finding that he could not overcome the reluctance of the Directors to his undertaking active operations himself, Hastings then suggested that he should be allowed to form a general confederation of Native States under the guarantee of British protection, as the only means



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

of putting down the predatory systems : if this failed, he suggested an immediate war with the Mahrattas as the only alternative. Still the Directors hesitated : they^o urged that a policy of peace at any price must be maintained. Hastings tried what he could do without actual war ; and succeeded temporarily in detaching the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur from the Mahratta Confederation by making a subsidiary Treaty with him. This gave some 300 miles of British frontier freedom from raids. At last, however, the operations of the Pindaris and of the Pathans became so audacious and insolent ; they had even commenced raiding further and further into British territory, and committing such atrocious acts of cruelty, that even the Directors at last realized the urgency of action, and they gave Hastings a qualified authority to suppress the Pindaris. His own Council, also, alarmed at the inroads of the raiders, who had actually reached Cuttack, a body 23,000 strong, passed a resolution for the suppression of the Pindaris, which, they said, ' had become an indispensable object of public duty.'

This was sufficient authority for Hastings ; and he promptly completed his arrangements so as to commence the operations at once which he had long had in contemplation. He set his armies in motion. But before undertaking active operations in the field, he made subsidiary Treaties and alliances with some of the Malwa and Rajputana States, notably with the ancient States of Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur. Simultaneously he moved up troops to occupy important strategic points so as to overawe any possible opposition to his plans on the part of those States. The most important arrangement he made was perhaps that by which he won over the great Pathan leader, Amir Khan, to keep the peace at this critical juncture, by offering him the Principality of Tonk. This, though somewhat smaller than the dominion he had contemplated carving out for himself with his own good sword, satisfied his ambition, and was an important factor making for the success of Hastings's plans. Amir Khan's readiness to accept the terms offered was also probably due to the fact that, owing to the strategic arrangements effected by Hastings's foresight, he had found himself practically hemmed in by superior British forces, commanded by distinguished British



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

91

generals. Similarly, the powerful Mahratta chieftain, Scindia, had been overawed by a powerful British force which blocked his way southwards; and he perforce remained quiet. In making his military preparations, Hastings had been influenced by the consideration of the possible forces that might be brought into the field against him from a combination of Native States with the Pindaris, a possibility which he could not afford to overlook. He calculated that he might have to meet a possible force of nearly 250,000 men, with some six hundred guns. He had, therefore, collected together a force of nearly 120,000 men, the largest and strongest British Army that had yet ever operated in India. He himself took the field as Commander-in-Chief, and took personal command of the central division of the Army. The operations commenced in the late autumn of 1817, and, by January, 1818, had come to a close, so far as the Pindaris were concerned. Those who were not slain in the open field were attacked in their homes, surrounded and cut to pieces. Of the principal leaders, one, Karim, throwing himself on the mercy of the victors, obtained a grant of land in Gorakhpur, another, Wasil, committed suicide, and a third, Chitu, fled to the jungles, where he was killed (and eaten) by a tiger.

As Hastings had anticipated, these operations brought the British once more into collision with the Mahrattas. The great house of Scindia, as already stated, had perforce to remain quiescent: but the chieftains at Puna, Nagpur, and Indore, all in turn rose against the British. The Peshwa of Puna was the first to take advantage of the temporary difficulties of the British; and at Nagpur the Bhonsla threw off the mask, and declared for the Peshwa as the head of the Mahratta nation. In each case, attacks were made on the British cantonments, only to be bravely repulsed: and, in each case, the Mahratta chieftains had to fly from their capitals. The Army of Holkar, which had been on its march to join the Peshwa, was also decisively defeated shortly after these events, at Mehidpur. It was not till the middle of 1818 that the Peshwa surrendered unconditionally. Appa Sahib, after taking refuge with the Sikhs, though without the countenance of Ranjit Singh, eventually moved to Rajputana, where he was allowed to live under

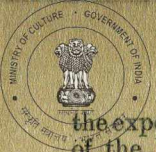


RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

surveillance, and where he eventually died. It is recorded that before one engagement that was fought between the British and the Peshwa's troops under his general Gokla, in which that general was killed, the Peshwa had had a secret message conveyed to the Governor-General offering to get Gokla poisoned, if he would admit him personally to terms. Needless to say that Hastings was furious at such a treacherous offer; and was not, therefore, over-pleased at the handsome provision which Sir John Malcolm had made for the Peshwa's future in his negotiations for the final surrender of that Mahratta chief. He expressed his disapproval of the terms accorded by Malcolm, but wisely accepted the accomplished fact. With the Peshwa's surrender, came the final scene in the long-drawn-out struggle for supremacy between the British and the Mahrattas. The Mahratta Rulership of the Peshwa was finally extinguished; his dominions were incorporated into the Bombay Presidency; he himself became a State pensioner, and the great houses of Scindia, Holkar, and the Bhonsla were definitely bound over to keep the peace in India. A final Treaty was made with Scindia in 1820: he was won over by the conciliatory tact and generosity of the Governor-General to become a faithful ally of the British Government, and his house has ever since remained consistently loyal. The spirit in which the present Maharaja Scindia observes the traditional loyalty of his house has been expressed in his own words in a speech he delivered at Gwalior, on the occasion of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to his State in 1905, which has been quoted by Sir David Barr in a paper recently read by him before a meeting of the Royal Society of Arts: 'Whatever useful work has been or is being undertaken in the various departments of my State, has but one ultimate goal, to help towards the stability of the British Empire, and with that end in view to ameliorate the condition of the people over which I am called on to rule.'

It is recorded that the Directors censured Hastings for embarking on this Mahratta campaign, and they denounced the extension of territory. In his answer to the address of the inhabitants of Calcutta, on his return from the campaign, Hastings gave an elaborate explanation of his policy, and he declared that, 'in his original plan there had not been



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

GL

the expectation or the wish of adding a rood to the dominions of the Honourable Company.' The recent wars had certainly brought about an enormous expansion of British influence, and with this extension of territorial power, an enormously increased responsibility. As Sir Alfred Lyall has said: 'The contest with the Native States for ascendancy was now finally decided, and the right of intervention for the security and tranquillity of the Indian people was now everywhere acknowledged from the two seas northward up to Sindh and the Sutlej river. From the Sindh frontier on the west, right round the Peninsula eastward to the frontier of Burmah, the whole coast-line of the Peninsula was under our authority: we held a long belt of the Himalayan highlands on the north, and our political jurisdiction extended to the western edge of the deserts bordering on the Indus. The largest, most important, and by far the most valuable portion of this region was now under our own direct administration; the rest was under our sovereign influence.' It is abundantly clear from a study of all the circumstances connected with the wars that neither aggression nor aggrandizement had been the object of the British Rulers; though as a matter of fact, the operations had ended in a very large accession of territory, they had been entirely defensive in their origin. The protection of the British Dominions and the security of British subjects and allies had been the paramount influences at work. That a change in the scope of the operations had eventually to be made was entirely due to what Hastings himself has described as, 'The unforeseen perfidy and the unaccountable folly of the Peshwa and the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur.' There is a story that the Raj-Guru, the spiritual guide of the royal house of Nipal, in conversation one day with the Assistant-Resident at Khatmandu, had shadowed forth such a contingency in the following remarkable words: 'One after another the Native Sovereigns will be urged by folly or overweening pride, to attack you: and then you must in self-defence conquer: and then you are much the stronger whether you intended it or not.' Notwithstanding the original censure of the Court of Directors passed on his policy, the general Court of the East India Company passed a vote of thanks for Hastings's services, in 1819; and the Company made



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

a grant of £60,000 for the purchase of an estate to be held by trustees for the benefit of Hastings, his wife, and issue. Both Houses of Parliament also voted their thanks the same year. Hastings received the honour also of a Grand Commandership of the Bath. This Order, it is of interest to note here, had only very recently been extended to officers of the Company's Indian forces, and after the close of the Mahratta campaign, Hastings had the satisfaction of being able to decorate that brave soldier, Ochterlony, with the ribbon of the Grand Cross. The words he uttered on this occasion were memorable: 'You have obliterated a distinction painful for the officers of the Honourable Company, and you have opened a door for your brothers-in-arms to a reward which their recent display of exalted spirit and invincible intrepidity proves could not be more deservedly extended to the officers of any army on earth.'

The work of reconstruction of so vast a territory was no light one: and besides, a heavy responsibility rested on the British Government, that the work should be of an equitable character. The British Government had become *de facto* the Paramount Suzerain of the country; and it could no longer evade the obligations of its Suzerainty. Hastings was fortunate in the men he had at his disposal for the great task; the names of such men as Elphinstone, Malcolm, Metcalfe, and Munro, whose careers have been lightly sketched in the second volume of this series, and that of David Ochterlony, were a guarantee that the work of reconstruction would be eminently equitable, satisfactory, and beneficial to the people. They were men of the same calibre as the great Marquess of Dalhousie was to find ready to his hand when he had similar work to do for the Punjab, that Hastings now had to do for Central India. The leading principles of this great work were these: in the first place, and as the basis of the whole political settlement, the Suzerainty of England was to be recognized. The existing order of things, so far as the internal affairs of the States were concerned, was to be interfered with as little as possible: only such territory was to be added to the British possessions as was necessary to establish British power on a secure footing, or which could be settled in no other way. The influence of those States which were ruled by chieftains



Sincerely anxious to co-operate with British officers in the task of reform and order, was to be increased. The influence of the Muhammadan princes was also to be strengthened as a counterpoise to Mahratta ambition. It is impossible to detail the work of settlement within the limits of this sketch, and besides much detail has been given already in a former volume : but one incident may be given to illustrate the many difficulties that had to be encountered ; it throws a side light, moreover, which is not without its value in helping to an interpretation of Mahratta character and policy. In the course of the operations, it was found that many Mahratta princes had rights in one and the same village : and portions of some distant town, not connected territorially with its rulers, were found to be ruled by different chieftains. All this necessitated a new delimitation of frontiers and rights in order to obviate any danger of future discord. Thus both Scindia and Holkar were found to hold certain rights in a district enveloped within the Raja of Bundi's territories : and both chieftains were found to be strangely averse to any rectification of rights. Scindia was offered even more valuable villages elsewhere, but it was only with great difficulty that he could be got to agree to any rectification. His agent gave a somewhat odd but eminently characteristic reason for this disinclination on Scindia's part. He had been asked why Scindia preferred co-partnership to sole and absolute occupancy, and he replied : ' We Mahrattas have a maxim that it is well to have a finger in every man's pie.' The effects of the Settlement proved most beneficial, and the people generally recognized them as such. Sir David Ochterlony's report, on the settlement of Rajputana especially, contained these striking words : ' From the prince to the peasant I have found every tongue eloquent in the expression of gratitude to the British Government for the blessings they enjoy.' The great task of reconstruction in the regions of Central India had been entrusted to Sir John Malcolm, and right well he accomplished his task. There was no exaggeration in the observations made by an historian on the effects of his good work : ' The dark age of trouble and violence, which so long spread its malign influence over the fertile regions of Central India, has thus ceased from



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

this time : and a new era has commenced, we trust, with brighter prospects, an era of peace, prosperity, and wealth, at least, if not of political liberty and high moral improvement.' Well has Sir W. W. Hunter said : 'The proudest boast of Lord Hastings and Sir John Malcolm was, not that they had advanced the British frontier, but that they had conferred the blessings of peace and good government upon millions who had groaned under the extortions of the Mahrattas and Pindaris.'

There were various other matters relating both to the external relations of India with Foreign Powers, and its internal administration, which required the attention of the Governor-General. The King of the distant realm of Burmah had not been an altogether disinterested observer of events in India, and in the middle of the Mahratta crisis he had sent a haughty message, containing practically a declaration of war against the British Government. Hastings always maintained a firm and conciliatory attitude in his relations with Burmah, and he treated the message with admirable imperturbability, and accepted it for what it was worth, and what it was probably only meant to be, as a piece of Oriental bluff. He was apparently justified in so treating it, for the Burmese were shortly afterwards attacked by the Siamese, and were soon sufficiently occupied with other matters. It was left to his successor in office to put a stop for a time to the insolence and encroachments of the Lord of the White Elephant, as the King of Burmah was styled in one of his many magniloquent titles. Hastings secured a safe sea-route to China by his statesmanlike occupation of Singapore, of which port he obtained the cession in 1819. In order still further to promote British commerce in Eastern waters, he dispatched missions to Siam and Cochin China. He also rendered the trade routes on the West of India more secure by destroying the nests of pirates that infested the western coasts, and the Persian Gulf, as well as the coasts of Arabia. Owing to misrule in Cutch, a State in Western India, he was compelled to incorporate it within the British Dominions. In the furtherance of internal peace, he was able to redress certain grievances that had caused insurrections at Bareilly and at Cuttack. He was also called on to undertake operations against the



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

97
SL

lukdars of the Doab, who had been arrogating to themselves sovereign rights. They had erected forts, and were harbouring gangs of dakaits, or highway bandits, in them. The reduction of the strong fortress of Hattrass at last broke their power, and was the prelude to the complete re-establishment of peace throughout the Province.

It has been stated in the sketch of the Marquess Wellesley, that he had determined to relegate the old Mogul Emperor to the position of a Government pensioner, but that he had still been allowed to surround himself with all the trappings of royalty. Hastings found that the Emperor thought that this had implied a recognition on the part of the British of his position as Lord Paramount in India, and he had claimed the observance of a very strict ceremonial from all visitors. The chief part of this etiquette was the presentation of a nazar, or gift, on the occasion of the visits of high British officials, as from an inferior to a superior. Hastings was close to Delhi on one of his tours, and he would have liked to visit the representative of the old Mogul dynasty, who in his days was Akbar II, but as the Emperor insisted on the presentation of a nazar, which Hastings saw would have implied an acknowledgement on his part that the Emperor was the liege lord of the British possessions, as being practically an act of homage, he declined to pay a visit; and he further gave orders that for the future, the British Resident at Delhi should discontinue the practice which was still followed on certain occasions, of presenting a nazar in the name of the Governor-General, on the ground that such a public testimony of dependence and subservience was irreconcilable with any rational policy. That the Emperor had some justification for his claim appears from the fact that the custom of the Government of Calcutta coining money with the effigy of the Emperor of Delhi upon it continued more or less down to the year 1858, when the sovereign powers of the Company were finally swept away, and with it went not only the counterfeit presentment of the Emperor, but the living representative of the ancient dynasty of the Moguls.

It fell to Hastings also, to take steps for a reform in the administration of the Nizam's territories; though such an interference with the internal affairs of a Native State was

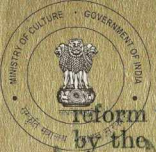


RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

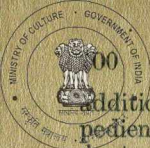
Contrary to his general policy. But his action was necessitated by the anomalous position of a great banking company at Haidarabad, known as William Palmer & Company. This anomalous position was very largely due to the sanction which he himself had given to its financing operations with the Nizam's Government. That Government had become heavily involved in debt to the bank, and had used its indebtedness as an excuse for the extortion and exactions of its revenue officials, which had led to much oppression of the people of the State. Hastings had been led to believe that the operations of the bank would be beneficial to the State. When, mainly through the exertions of Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had become Resident at the court of Haidarabad, the real state of things was revealed, and it was ascertained that a great portion of the loan had been misapplied, and that the operations of the firm were becoming a danger to the administration, Hastings took the necessary steps to dissociate the British Government entirely from the banking company, and withdrew the sanction given them of making loans to the Haidarabad Government. The Directors of the Company had indeed already expressed their disapproval of his original act in granting the company exemption from the law forbidding loans by British subjects to Native princes. During the long inquiry instituted by Hastings, the Court of Directors had cast doubts on the sincerity of his motives; these suspicions were particularly galling to a man of Hastings's sensitive and proud character; and they resulted in his sending in his resignation in 1821. As soon as his dispatch reached England, as it did, early in 1822, George Canning was appointed his successor. In the same year the Court of Directors passed a vote of thanks to Hastings for his zeal and ability. As the result of an inquiry held in 1825, after Hastings had left India for good, his personal integrity in the matter of the banking firm's operations was completely vindicated, though his policy was impugned.

Of Hastings's internal administration, one of his biographers has said, 'His administration marks an epoch in the internal development of the country, when the finances were put in order, when India was brought more closely within the fold of the national family, and when the foundations of domestic



reform were laid. From this time the native has been taken by the hand ; his moral well-being has been regarded as a duty, and gradually he has been brought into contact with European ideas of social duties, and prepared for the reception of a higher form of civilization.' Hastings was called on to deal, amongst other matters, with certain suggestions emanating from the Court of Directors in the field of judicial reform. Great difficulty had arisen from the accumulation of arrears in the Court of Civil Judicature, owing largely to the paucity of judges ; but also owing, one writer has incidentally remarked, ' to the popularity of the tribunals under British control, combined with the increasing number and prosperity of the inhabitants.' The Board of Control had proposed a revival of the old Native Panchayats. Hastings, as the head of the Government of Bengal, found the proposal an impracticable one for that Province, for these institutions had been partially destroyed by the revenue settlements that had been made in that Presidency. He, therefore, sought for a remedy in the improvement of the pay and status of the Native judges ; in an enlargement of their powers, and in an addition to their numbers, and at the same time he arranged for their more efficient supervision. In Madras, there were at hand village organizations of the kind proposed, as the village systems were in a better state of preservation, but it was observed that the people soon deserted them for the Native and British tribunals. In Bombay the proposals of the Board met with greater success, as no other form of arbitration was known to the people ; the result was that the courts of the head-men and of the Panchayats were more resorted to than in other Provinces, and the proposals of the Court were, therefore, not so impracticable as they had been in other Provinces.

Then as regards the important branch of Criminal Procedure, the Board had suggested a reunion of fiscal and police duties in one person, doubtless for reasons of economy, but this would indeed have been a step backward ; and would have undone much of the work of Lord Cornwallis, who had been careful to separate the functions of Collectors from those of criminal judges. The change, moreover, would have invested the Zamindars with criminal authority, and the Native revenue officers would have received



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

additional powers which it would have been very inexpedient to entrust them with, as there was not wanting abundant evidence at this period, of organized rapacity on the part of the Native officers. Hastings, therefore, did not consider the change advisable, at any rate, in Bengal. However, one change was made; the powers of Native magistrates were enlarged, with at the same time the check of increased supervision. They were, moreover, enabled to deal with cases which had hitherto been decided by the Circuit Judges. An improved set of Police Regulations was also introduced, the main object being to secure greater activity and to guard against the abuses of power which were not uncommon. In Madras, and Bombay, where the conditions were somewhat different from those prevailing in Bengal, changes were made more or less consonant with the proposals of the Board, though they were not destined to be in force for very long.

In revenue administration, very little change took place in Lower Bengal, where the Permanent Settlement, made by Lord Cornwallis, was in force. There were certain tracts in which this Settlement had not been made, and where this was so, Hastings, being opposed to the Zamindari system, and finding it impossible to contract directly with the number of cultivators in districts where a teeming population existed, had engagements entered into with the representatives of each village community for the whole of the Government demand. Everything, moreover, that was possible at the time was done to correct abuses where they were found to prevail; and at least the foundations were laid of an equitable settlement to be carried to completion at a later period. In Madras, the system known as the Ryotwari system was introduced by Sir Thomas Munro, who had become the Governor of that province in 1820. By this system the cultivators of the soil became the direct payers of revenue without the intervention of either a Zamindar or the village community. This form of tenure prevails to this day in that Province. The peasants were at the same time relieved of unjust exactions to which they had been obliged to submit in the past. In Bombay, which was under the Governorship of Mountstuart Elphinstone, for a great part of Hastings's



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

101

administration, the Government was principally occupied in making investigations: but a commencement was made of a Settlement on the village system under which the head-men made the assessment, certain checks against oppression being provided.

In the year 1813 came the period, when, under Pitt's India Bill, the Charter of the Company was to be revised before renewal. This was done regularly at intervals of twenty years. It had always been customary to hold an inquiry before the Charter could be renewed; and two of Hastings's most distinguished predecessors had been invited to give evidence on this occasion, Warren Hastings, and the Marquess Wellesley. One matter that came up for discussion was the proper provision of facilities for public worship for English officials in India. The Marquess Wellesley made an eloquent speech, detailing what he had done in the direction of having the Ecclesiastical Establishments in India put on a proper footing with a bishop at their head, and the encouragement he had further given to prudent missionaries. He, indeed, had been the pioneer in the movement that Hastings was thus able to promote. A better organization in the matter of public worship resulted; and from this time onwards the Church in India has been directed by its proper spiritual head, the bishop. The first of a long line of distinguished Bishops of Calcutta to go out under the new scheme was Bishop Middleton. Hastings did not confine himself to promoting the moral interests of the members of his own community. He took great interest in the subject of the education of the youth of the country, for whom, indeed, he established schools at his own cost. He was practically the first Governor-General to exert himself to promote the moral and intellectual improvement of Indians: indeed, his views on the subject were said to have been in advance of his time. He did not neglect either the great class known as Eurasians: he admitted those among this great community, whose position entitled them to consideration, freely to Government House, and endeavoured by every means in his power to gain their goodwill by showing them that colour was to be no bar to his favour. Sanitation was another subject that did not escape his attention, and he



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

endeavoured to make Calcutta a more healthy place of sojourn for the wayfaring Englishman than it had been for many a long day. He encouraged the Press by removing some of the restrictions upon its freedom : indeed, it was during his administration that the first Native journal appeared.

Having arrived in India in 1814, Hastings did not finally leave the country till 1823. In spite of his age—he was sixty-nine when he left India, ‘no man,’ says his biographer, ‘had ever worked harder than he had or devoted himself more unremittingly to his duties ; he continued his labours without intermission for the nine long years of his rule, and never was there a man of whom it could be more truly said that, “ Self was the only being seemingly forgotten.” ’ After he had left India, financial embarrassments compelled him to seek office again under the British Government. His financial difficulties were very largely due to his magnificent hospitality when in office, and to his extreme generosity at all times. This, indeed, was always one of his most marked characteristics. One conspicuous illustration may be given here. When, during the French Revolution, several of the princes of France were obliged to leave their own country and take refuge in England, Hastings placed one of his seats in England at their disposal, and, knowing that they must be in need of money, and not wanting to embarrass them by an ostentatious offer of financial assistance, he took a means of relieving their necessities that was truly characteristic of the true English gentleman, who does not let his left hand know what his right hand doeth. He left in each bedroom a cheque book signed by himself but with blank spaces where his guests might fill in the amounts at their pleasure. In 1824, he accepted, at the age of seventy, the office of the Governorship of Malta, with which the appointment of Commander-in-Chief also went. In 1825, he visited England for a time and took his seat in the House of Lords for the first time since his elevation to a Marquisate. He then returned to his post at Malta. He had only held office two years when he died as the result of a fall from his horse. He died on H.M.S. *Revenge*. His last dying wish that his right hand should be cut off



MARQUESS OF HASTINGS

103
SL

and buried with his wife, was carried out when the Marchioness of Hastings eventually died, and 'it now rests clasped with hers in the family vault'.

'In personal appearance,' writes one of his biographers, 'the Marquess of Hastings was a striking figure, tall and athletic, with an impressive manner. His capacity for rule was remarkable, and as a skilful soldier and an able administrator he is not likely to be forgotten.'



CHAPTER IV

THE BRITISH ADVANCE EASTWARDS TO BURMAH

EARL AMHERST, 1773-1857

THE first Lord Amherst was Governor-General of British North America. He was one of Pitt's men, who have been described as 'Young men burning with enthusiasm and not afraid of responsibility'. His biographer, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, has said of him: 'His greatest glory is to have conquered Canada, and if much of that glory belongs to Pitt and Wolfe, neither Pitt's combination, nor Wolfe's valour would have been effectual without Amherst's steady purpose and unflinching determination.' His title descended to his nephew, the subject of this sketch, who, because of the intimate relations both of his uncle and his father—another distinguished soldier—with Pitt, was christened William Pitt, after that great statesman, who had stood sponsor for him at his baptism. Amherst was educated at Westminster School, and he afterwards proceeded to the University of Oxford, where he took the degree of M.A. at the age of twenty-four. As usual with members of the aristocracy, he took the usual continental tour, and studied the European languages to such advantage, that he became a good linguist. A story has been told that some years afterwards, when he was Governor-General of India, an Italian bishop with whom he was conversing congratulated him on the purity of his pronunciation of Italian. His uncle had died the same year that he left the University, and he thus became Lord Amherst. He was employed for some years in the Diplomatic Service, and was sent as Ambassador Extraordinary to Sicily. He was made a Privy Councillor in the year 1815.

His most important service at this period of his career was his mission to China on behalf of the East India Company. Some differences had arisen at Canton, where



The Company had a trading factory, between the English merchants and the Chinese mandarins. Lord Amherst was dispatched as Ambassador Extraordinary to the court of Peking. He kept a journal of his experiences: the voyage out was a long one, as in those days, a stay in the Brazils was always part of a journey to the East. And one feature of these journeys was the call at the Cape. It was no uncommon thing in the days of the old sailing ships for passengers to be for some days within sight of land, and yet not be able to reach it. Such an experience had befallen the wife of the Governor-General of India, Lady Hastings, whom Lord Amherst met at the Cape on her way to England to place her son at school. She had been twelve days off the harbour before she was able to go on shore. Calms and contrary winds all had to be reckoned with by those who travelled in the olden times, and the necessary provision of stores and books had to be made for a voyage likely to last several months. Still further East he visited the Island of Java, which, at the time of his first visit, was a British possession, having been taken from the Dutch by Lord Minto. On his return voyage the island had again become a Dutch possession, having been restored to them. Lord Amherst noted the contrast between English and Dutch rule in the island in its effects upon the attitude of the people towards their foreign Rulers: 'Where an Englishman,' he wrote, 'could travel anywhere, a Dutchman would be shot if found outside the fortifications: in every part of the island the English travel fearlessly in very small numbers and unarmed, and, so far from experiencing injury or insult, have met with nothing but kindness and hospitality.' The Dutch do not appear to have advanced much in conciliatory methods of administration during the century that has elapsed since these words were penned, for they have had many little wars since, and their Government may still be described as 'a Government of sentry-boxes'.

The embassy in charge of Lord Amherst eventually reached China. The Chinese are past masters of the art of procrastination when it suits their purpose. And the usual methods were employed on this occasion as they were during both earlier and later missions to the court



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

of Peking. An interesting account of Lord Amherst's mission has been given by a writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. On his arrival at Canton he was met by mandarins of inferior grade, with whom he altogether declined to deal. He then went on to Tientsin; here he was met by commissioners direct from the court, with whom he was able to treat. Seeing him far removed from all semblance of English power, like all Asiatics who bow only when conscious of weakness, these men assumed an arrogant tone in their dealings with the envoy. He had brought with him certain presents for the Emperor from the Prince Regent: these they regarded as tribute. They tried all the means in their power to get him to promise to perform the customary ceremonial of the Kotow, which consists in prostration and striking the forehead nine times on the ground in token of homage. They even went the length of asserting, though falsely, as history has recorded, that Lord Macartney had gone through this degrading ceremony on the occasion of his mission. Lord Amherst told them that he would be willing to make the concession of bowing to the Presence nine times, but he would never consent to prostrate himself. This seemed to give them a hint for getting out of the difficulty: and after several weeks more had passed in profitless discussion, they seem to have communicated with the court about this promise of the English envoy: and to have received orders to see what this would amount to, and whether it was such an obeisance as could be made to 'The Golden Foot' without derogation from the ancient dignity of the Emperors of China. They now invited Amherst to a banquet: after the banquet certain imperial insignia were brought in. The commissioners performed their Kotow, and then Lord Amherst was invited to perform his nine obeisances. This apparently he did to their satisfaction and without loss to his own dignity by unnecessary crooking of the knees. A little delay then occurred, pending the answer from the court to the commissioners' assurances that loss of dignity to 'The Golden Foot' would not ensue were this concession to be allowed the envoy. When a favourable answer arrived, the envoy was promptly hustled into a boat, and taken rapidly to Peking, where he eventually



arrived worn out with fatigue. He was just preparing to turn in for the night, when messengers arrived ordering him peremptorily into the Presence. Amherst regarded this as a direct insult, and suspected that it was all part of a deliberate plan to force him to perform the Kotow after all; so he refused to go. Thereupon he was then and there hustled off by boat again to Tientsin, whence he proceeded more leisurely, and with more courtesy on the part of his conductors, down the Grand Canal back to Canton. It is not improbable that no insult was really intended by the Chinese commissioners: apart from their ignorance of the unwritten laws of diplomatic courtesy, they knew their own court too well to imagine that a concession of the kind which they might have been prepared to make was at all palatable: and they knew the importance of taking advantage of it at once before second thoughts prevailed, while the impulse was still fresh, and when they had the excuse of the envoy's fatigue to justify them in getting the concession made. When the envoy's refusal to go upset their calculations, they had no alternative but to get him out of the place as speedily as they could, and thus wash their hands of any further responsibility in the matter. Lord Amherst met with various disconcerting incidents on his way home again. As if those he had already met with had not been enough, the man-of-war he was travelling to England in was wrecked soon after leaving Manilla. The next ship he took passage by caught fire. He touched at St. Helena on the way home and had an interesting interview with the Emperor Napoleon. The autumn of 1817 saw him back in England again.

In 1823 Lord Amherst was offered and accepted the Governor-Generalship of India in succession to the Marquess of Hastings. The offer had originally been made to George Canning, who had accepted it, but was compelled by circumstances to give up the idea of proceeding to India. Lord William Bentinck had been another candidate for the appointment, but his claims were set aside for the time, and he was destined to succeed Lord Amherst. In the interval between the departure of the Marquess of Hastings and the arrival of Lord Amherst, the high office



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

had been held provisionally by Mr. John Adam, the senior Member of Council. Certain action which he had been compelled to take in deporting a European editor and publisher from India had aroused a good deal of feeling among the Anglo-Indian community—history does not record that it agitated the Indian community over much, the Indian Press not being the power it has since become. The man had sinned against the canons of good taste and reasonable criticism in ridiculing the authorities; this was considered a serious offence in days when the Company, whose officers were a mere handful of Europeans, owed much to prestige in the exercise of their authority. But the action of Mr. Adam had been interpreted as an unreasonable interference with the liberty of the Press; and Lord Amherst had to throw oil on the troubled waters. A censorship, it must be remembered, existed at this time, though it had been treated as more or less non-existent since the days of Cornwallis. And further it was the law of the land that all Europeans, whether Englishmen or foreigners, should take out a licence even for permission to live in the Company's dominions, let alone to trade, or to exercise any profession. There are not wanting those who in the light of recent events in India would like to see the censorship of the days of Lord Lytton re-established; and the present Viceroy of India, Lord Minto, has expressly said: 'In my opinion a further general control of the Press in India is imperatively necessary.' By the recent Newspaper Bill of 1908, restrictions are placed on that portion of the Press which has abused its powers of freedom.

The most important event connected with Lord Amherst's administration was the war with Burmah. Sir Alfred Lyall, in his work, *British Dominion in India*, has this passage which will help to illustrate what had been going on in India and the countries round it during the rise to power of the English themselves in the East: 'It is a remarkable coincidence that during the first fifty years occupied by the rise of the English Dominion in India, other Rulerships were being founded simultaneously by a not dissimilar process around us. In the course of that period (1757-1805) the tribes of Afghanistan had been collected into



subjection to one kingdom under the dynasty of Ahmed Shah : the petty chiefships, Hindu and Muhammadan, of the Punjab had been welded into a military despotism by the strong hand of Ranjit Singh : and the Rajas on the lower Highlands of the Himalayas had submitted to the dominion of Nipal. Lastly, about the time when Clive was subduing Bengal, a Burmese military leader had established by conquest a Rulership which had its capital in the plains traversed by the Irawadi river and its principal affluents from the upper waters of those rivers down to the sea. The Kingdom of Burmah, founded in 1757 by Alompra's subjection of Pegu, now included not only the open tracts about the Irawadi and the Salween, it also stretched far southward down the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal. It was absorbing all the mountainous region overhanging the eastern land frontier of India, and the Burmese armies were pressing westwards across the watershed of those mountains through the upland country about the Brahmaputra towards the great alluvial plains of Eastern Bengal. There had consequently been frequent disputes on that border between the Anglo-Indian and the Burmese authorities, for the dividing line was unsettled and variable, and on both sides the landmarks had been unavoidably set forward in pioneering fashion until they were separated only by strips of semi-dependent tribal lands and spheres of influence from which each party desired to exclude the other. In this situation it has always been the policy of the English in India, as of other civilized empires in contact with barbarism, to maintain the zone of tribal lands as a barrier or quick-set hedge against intruders upon their frontier by taking the little border States, or headships, under their protection. The first Burmese War began, like several of our Indian wars, over a violation of this Protectorate. The Burmese were engaged in annexing the country in the north-east of what is now the Anglo-Indian Province of Assam, and around Manipur : they were making inroads into Cachar, then under British protection, and were threatening the Bengal District of Sylhet. Besides other minor encroachments and breaches of international law, they had seized an island belonging to the British on the coast of Arakan,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

and having never measured themselves against civilized forces, they saw no reason why they should stop before they had fairly tried their neighbour's capacity to resist them.'

The predecessors of Lord Amherst had all experienced the gradual encroachment of the Burmese Empire on British territory. The founder of the dynasty had been Alompra, the Mighty Hunter. He had been apparently a man of great strength of character, while his successors, down to the time of the last King of Burmah, Theebaw, who has been described as the feeblest of them all, were noted for their pride, without the possession of the stronger characteristics of the founder of the Empire. One of the kingdoms on the frontiers of the old kingdom of Burmah was Arakan, the authority of whose monarchs had extended at one time as far as Dacca, the present political capital of the new province of Eastern Bengal. The preposterous claim made to Dacca by Burmese kings in later days is due to this fact, that as conquerors of the Province of Arakan they considered they should also be lords of Dacca. The events that gradually led up to the first war with Burmah were as follows. In the first place, certain emigrants from Arakan had fled from Burmese oppression and misrule into British territory at Chittagong. The Burmese Government had sent their armies in pursuit of these men : the earliest of these emigrants were surrendered, but others kept coming, and the Burmese troops again commenced making incursions into British territory, nominally in pursuit. The British Government of the day had some difficulty in getting them to withdraw. Two missions had been sent to Ava to treat, but had met with discourtesy. A crisis came in 1811, during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Minto, when one of these emigrants put himself at the head of a band of his followers and carried the war into Burmese territory by invading Arakan. The Governor of Arakan held the British responsible, and a third mission was sent to Ava. The envoy only just escaped being detained and held as a hostage. The emigrant leader was at last driven out of Arakan, back to Chittagong : he still, however, kept up his incursions into Burmese territory and was hunted both by the Company's Sepoys and by



EARL AMHERST

CSL

Burmese King's forces : his death in 1815 temporarily put an end to this particular trouble.

Then in the second case, during the Governor-Generalship of the Marquess of Hastings, came an insolent dispatch from the Court of Ava demanding the restitution of Dacca and Murshidabad, 'undoubted appanages,' they were styled, 'of the crown of Arakan.' This demand, it was added, would be enforced if the general body of emigrants were not returned to their country. The Marquess firmly refused to send back men who had for the last thirty years been under British protection. Confident that the British would preserve inviolate the sanctity of the asylum granted them, these men had said to the British officers at Chittagong : 'We will never return to Arakan : if you choose to slaughter us here, we are ready to die : if you drive us away we will go and dwell in the jungles of the great mountains.' The King then couched his demand in somewhat less magniloquent language, and wrote : 'If you keep in your country my slaves, the broad path of intercourse will be blocked up.' The next incident was the flight into British territory, and his request for British protection, of a King of Assam whom the Burmese had deposed. The same process went on : the Burmese Army threatened invasion : the British prepared to repel aggression. Then came yet another incident making for war, this time connected with Manipur. As far back as 1762, a Treaty of alliance had been made between the Raja of Manipur and the British Governor of Fort William. The Burmese had, however, succeeded in establishing themselves in that State for a time, and some of the princes had taken refuge in Cachar, which was under British protection. The Burmese had demanded their surrender : but the British altogether declined to surrender men who had taken sanctuary on what was practically British soil. The Burmese had retaliated by massing a large army on the frontiers of the Bengal District of Cachar, and had actually seized a portion of British territory. It seems evident that the Burmese King had for some time been contemplating an invasion of the British dominions on a large scale. Lady Amherst has incidentally noted in her diary a curious story which seems to point to this. A certain Raj-Guru, spiritual



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

guide to the royal family, whom she describes as 'young and good-looking, with a benevolent smile, and a dignified manner', was received in audience by the Governor-General. He spoke in Persian, and told the Governor-General that the two objects of his ambition were to visit the holy places of Jagannath, and to pay his respects to the Governor-General. It turned out afterwards that this elegant young priest was a spy, making observations on behalf of the Court of Ava.

A collision between the Burmese and British troops had actually occurred in January, 1824: and the results of this had inflated still further the pride of the advisers of the King of Ava: the Burmese had been defeated, but not decisively: the force defeated had been able to effect a junction with a larger force and had held out successfully for a time in a large stockade on the banks of the river Surma. The King now entirely miscalculated the real military strength of the British. He regarded them, indeed, as 'a mere handful of traders who hired Sepoys to do their fighting', and he thought he could commit further acts of aggression with impunity. So he promptly seized an island belonging to the British off the coast of Arakan, and expelled the garrison which the British had placed on it to protect their commerce from molestation. Lord Amherst sent up a body of regular troops to re-occupy the position, but still stayed his hand from active retaliation until he had tried what diplomacy would do. He sent an ultimatum, however, and demanded an apology, but in sufficiently courteous terms, so as to leave the door open for reconciliation, and he wrote that 'he retained an unfeigned desire to avail himself of any proper opening which may arise for an accommodation of differences with the King of Ava'. The only reply that was vouchsafed to this polite message was a peremptory demand preferred by the Viceroy of Pegu, on behalf of his royal master, for the surrender to the Burmese of Dacca, Chittagong, and the Island of Shappuri: this haughty message ended with the words that the Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese armies, who was also Governor of Arakan, Maha Bandula, would be prepared to listen to any petition that the Governor-General of India might be prepared to prefer.



such a demand there was but one answer, and that was war, and it was accordingly declared in February, 1824. The preliminary survey given above shows abundantly that Lord Amherst's policy was not actuated by any desire for aggrandizement, but solely by the necessity of securing from aggression the territories under his charge, and giving protection to those who had asked for and had received from that country which has never yet refused it, the privilege of an asylum under the British flag.

Lord Amherst decided on employing mainly Madras troops, as they were less scrupulous on the subject of caste, and less afraid of crossing the Kala Pani. Bengal troops were employed, but they marched across country: it is interesting as only one more illustration out of innumerable others of the difficulty of gauging what the behaviour of Orientals will be under special circumstances, that the very concession by which the Bengal Sepoys were allowed to march overland instead of being obliged to cross the seas, indirectly led to a mutiny. Strict observation of caste rules necessitated the carriage of an enormous number of pots and pans for private and individual cooking. This difficulty is largely obviated in these days by the formation of men of the same caste into messes. The military authorities knowing the difficulties of a march overland, and knowing the demand there would be for transport for purely military requirements, had issued an order that the Sepoys should provide their own transport for their cooking-pots and other *impedimenta*. The Sepoys found they would have to pay exorbitant rates: discontent therefore arose, which passed from insubordination to actual mutiny. One regiment at last refused to march. Prompt and energetic measures nipped the incipient mutiny in the bud. The military authorities had had another lesson, but it passed practically unheeded. A small steam vessel accompanied the flotilla to Rangoon, which was the first objective of the main body of the Army. It was thought that the sight of such a vessel might not be without its effect on the imaginations of the superstitious races against whom the British troops were now for the first time called upon to operate. The country in which the British forces were soon engaged was a different one geographically from



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

India : and its peoples were racially also distinct : if anything, they were even more superstitious than the peoples of the vast continent of India. Many instances occurred throughout the campaign of the trust they put in divination and enchantments. Thus, after the British had captured Rangoon, which was the first incident of the campaign, it is recorded that a body of devotees bound themselves under a curse to recover the great Burmese Shrine, known as the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, which had been originally built by the great hunter, Alompra. They went through a special course of magical training, and called themselves 'The Invulnerables'. Certain Shan princesses also, whom the British were to encounter at the head of their troops at a later period of the campaign, had given out that they were enchantresses : and that they had the power of converting a cannon-ball into a drop of water, as soon as it was fired from a big gun. In the end, however, what with the steam vessel the British had brought with them, and the rockets, by one of which the Burmese general Maha Bandula himself was fated to be killed, they had come round to the opinion that the British were superior to them in their arts of divination and enchantment, and reports began to be current among them that 'the British were sorcerers able to bewitch their men, their artillery, and their stockades, and that every white face was a devil'.

The first phase of the campaign ended with the capture of Rangoon. By their promptness in attack the British were able to rescue the small British and American community from impending death. They were found in irons ready bound for execution. The Burmese general, Maha Bandula, notwithstanding that element of overweening conceit in his character, which, after all, was but characteristic of his race, had won the admiration of the British generals. He had been contemplating a march on Calcutta, and had assured his royal master of his capability by sending him some prisoners he had taken in one of his engagements with the British. The King had commissioned him to bring the English lord back with him bound in golden fetters. The capture of Rangoon, however, had led to a change of plan : and the King now ordered his



EARL AMHERST

GL
115

general to expel the British from Rangoon. He therefore issued a Proclamation, in which these words occurred : 'In eight days I shall dine in the public hall and afterwards return thanks in the Shwe Dagon Pagoda.' He delivered his main attack with 60,000 men, but the attack was repulsed ; and he lost heavily, and was obliged to retreat. It is of interest to record that one of the methods of attack was almost exactly identical with that in use by the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War. As the line advanced it would suddenly disappear from view into trenches which the men dug out as they moved along. The intelligence department of the day had not included Burmah within the possible sphere of operations for a British Army : and they were indebted for a map of the country to a Eurasian named Gibson, one of the many adventurous men of British descent, who were to be found all over Asia at this period of Indian history. He was in the service of the court of Ava, and was returning from a mission to Cochin China at the time. This map was found very useful during the field operations that followed the defeat of Maha Bandula's force in its attack upon Rangoon. These operations were by no means simple. The enemy had a very effective system of land defence in their strong stockades, which were built of solid timber, with deep trenches inside and outside. The result of the united operations in the second phase of the campaign was that by the end of 1825, all traces of Burmese rule had disappeared from Assam, Cachar, and Manipur, and the capital of Arakan had fallen into British hands.

The operations that brought about the capture of Prome during the next phase of the campaign, resulted in the death of the great Burmese general, Maha Bandula. Thus the most formidable enemy the British had had to encounter was removed out of their way. The prince who succeeded him now gave out to his followers that he was going to tell the King the truth, and to implore him to make peace as the only means of saving the remains of the Empire. The inhabitants of Prome were soon won over by the conciliatory methods adopted by the British commanders. They were described as a merry, light-hearted folk with no caste restrictions, their nature frank

and kindly, loving sport and song. These indeed are the characteristics of the Burmese generally, and it is these traits that have made them, it has been said : ' The most popular of all the races living under the shadow of the British Throne.' One cause of this light-heartedness would seem to be the absence among them very largely of that sense of responsibility and duty which other races retain as the result of different religious conditions. Buddhism is a very sublime system under its esoteric aspect, but in its practical working amongst the Burmese it is of a very mechanical character, without much influence on the moral character of the people. It is left very largely to the priest, and the prayers of the people are either traced on banners which are hung up to be the sport of winds, or rolled up in drums which are set ceaselessly rolling by manual or automatic action. The greatest difficulty the British experienced was in getting the King of Ava to see the necessity of coming to terms. It took him long to learn his lesson. He had levied fresh troops from the Shan States. The Shan princesses, who ruled these States, placed themselves in male attire at the head of their troops. After one engagement, one of these princesses was found among the slain : she was honourably interred by the British on the field where she had so gallantly fallen. Another had been seen to fall, but had been carried off by her people. Overtures were at last made by the King for an understanding : and commissioners accompanied the British general to the capital to negotiate. An amusing anecdote is related in connexion with these negotiations. At the first meeting the Burmese chiefs spoke in a loud and insolent tone of voice, telling the British commissioners that if they wished for peace they must sue for it. On the commissioners remarking that this was hardly the language to employ to a victorious general at the head of a victorious army, the chiefs replied in low and subdued tones that their lofty language was only meant for the ears of their own people, and that the British need not regard it. The chiefs had doubtless been a bit perplexed at getting this reply from the British commissioners. They were Orientals and had hitherto only had experience of Orientals. An Oriental would have interpreted their high and lofty



EARL AMHERST

CSL

language for what it really was, mere bluff intended to test the quality of their opponents. They did not comprehend the ways of thought of these plain-spoken and matter-of-fact English gentlemen. However, with true Oriental adaptability, they met the situation as has been recorded, and bowed to the inevitable.

These first negotiations resulted in the conclusion of an armistice for forty days, and the British commissioners, having entertained the Burmese at a banquet, left the capital fully assured that peace would now be concluded. But that was the last thing the King of Burmah intended. He went on quietly with his preparations for a renewal of the struggle, and when he thought the time had come he sent a haughty message to the English camp to this effect: 'Let the English generals empty their hands and return to their ships, and trouble us no more, they are not sincere in supplicating for peace, and their petition is not heard.' Sir Archibald Campbell, who was in command, promptly ordered an advance on the capital. A sanguinary battle lasting over three days, in which the Shan levies played a conspicuous part, resulted in the decisive victory of the British. Again the King made overtures for peace, but again his move was only a blind. It is recorded that when one of his ministers ventured to suggest that the time had now really come to make peace, he threw a javelin at the man and transfixed him. Again the British general ordered an advance. At last final overtures were brought to his camp by some American missionaries, whom the King was holding as hostages at his capital. By their good offices a Treaty was eventually signed at Yandabu in 1826. It is recorded that the missionaries faithfully returned to the capital after discharging their mission. Lady Amherst has noted in her diary a story which had been told her by an American missionary in connexion with the King of Ava. The missionary had asked the King's permission to preach to and, if possible, convert his Majesty's subjects. The King had replied that the request was granted, but he grimly added: 'I will cut off the heads of all that you convert, and send them to the Paradise you speak of.' The final result of this first Burmese War was the extension of British Dominion east-

ward of India proper, and the acquisition of the valuable Provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim, and the recognition of a British protectorate over Upper Assam, Cachar, and Manipur. Thus, as Sir Alfred Lyall has said, 'for the first time a non-Indian people were brought within the jurisdiction of the Indian Empire.'

Peace had only just been concluded with Burmah when another weighty matter pressed itself upon the notice of Lord Amherst. This was the state of unrest that prevailed in Upper India along what was at this time in British Indian history the north-west frontier. This was due partly to some scattered bands of Pindaris still to be found in some of the Native States; and also to the preachings of a religious mendicant who had given himself out as the last of the Hindu Avatars, or incarnations of the godhead into manhood, of which there are at least nine in the Hindu religious systems. Intrigues were also on foot for the overthrow of British influence in these regions of India, and the centre of these intrigues was ascertained to be, amongst other places, Bhartpur. This had been the only fortress that had held out successfully against one of Lake's spirited frontal attacks during the Mahratta campaigns of 1803-5. Various reasons have been given why Lake was unsuccessful here. The true explanation seems to be that his force was too weak for the effort required of it. Lake, moreover, acted on the principle that in Asiatic warfare the best policy is always to take the offensive at all times, as to stand still spells defeat. Besides he was supported by the opinion of an excellent authority, that 'no forts in Hindustan could stand against a European attack'. Bhartpur had, however, proved an exception to this rule. There was a man now in command there who was determined to put this again to the test and to try whether the fort could not retain its reputation for invulnerability to British attack. This man, Durjan Sal, had recently usurped the throne from the rightful heir, the young Raja who should have succeeded when his father died, and whom the British Resident at Delhi, Sir David Ochterlony, had recognized as the rightful heir. The Rajputana States on the borders of which the great Jat fortress of Bhartpur stood, had



EARL AMHERST

19
SL

Now for some years recognized that the British Government was 'the Guardian of tranquillity, law, and right'. Lord Amherst felt bound to maintain this reputation so hardly earned, and gave full authority to Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had succeeded Sir David Ochterlony in his important post at Delhi, to take such measures as should ensure that the succession of the rightful heir would be guaranteed. These measures first took the form of expostulation with the usurper, and when this failed, a resort to war remained the only possible alternative. The operations were by no means easy, and the garrison, composed of Jats, Rajputs, and Afghans, fought with most conspicuous gallantry. It is recorded that all refused quarter and perished to a man when the final grand assault was made which resulted in the capture of the fortress. The young Raja was restored to his throne and tranquillity ensued.

The work of administration of the country had been practically not interrupted either by the Burmese War, which had been carried on beyond the frontiers of India, or by the operations for the recapture of Bhartpur, which had been confined to one corner of the North-West Province. The older generation of the men on whom the Governors-General of India relied and whose characteristic was a commanding sense of public duty, was being succeeded by a younger generation imbued by their example with the same high sense of responsibility. Lord Amherst was lucky still to be able to secure the advice of such men as Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe, and Elphinstone, but they were now approaching the end of their service, and most of their work lay behind them—indeed two of them had vacated office before he himself gave up the Governor-Generalship, Munro by death, Elphinstone by resignation. The work to be done needed, indeed, the best men he could secure : it was a work of the preservation of internal order and peace, a work that needed vigilance and sagacity on the part of officers and efficiency of administration both civil and military. Financial difficulties always pressed the Rulers of India in these early days, and the great problem with Lord Amherst, as with so many of his predecessors and successors, was how to increase the revenue to meet the increasing expenses of Government



RULERS OF INDIA

SL

Without unduly burdening the people with extra taxation the principal source of revenue has always been the land. Lord Amherst was not called on to initiate any striking departures in Land Policy. His function was largely to watch the working of the systems actually in force, and, if possible, to suggest and apply remedies for any abuses that might be discovered in the working of the different systems. The Permanent Settlement was found to contain within it certain germs of injustice to the large class of hereditary cultivators, and the protection of their interests formed the subject of subsequent legislation. The large class, moreover, of clever underlings of the English officials, who have been described as a 'class keen enough to avail themselves of all the niceties of refined bureaucracy, but with no sympathy for the moral purpose underlying great administrative schemes', were found to be making large acquisitions of land to which they were not naturally entitled. The system that appeared to be working most beneficially appeared to Lord Amherst to be that introduced into the Madras Presidency by Sir Thomas Munro, and known as the Ryotwari System.

There were still many tracts unsettled in the Upper Provinces and many difficulties had to be overcome before the work of settlement could proceed smoothly. The men to whom the preparation of registers had to be entrusted belonged to what has been called the 'Writer Class', and, though exceedingly industrious, still had their faults, chief among which was rapacity. A not uncommon procedure with them was to falsify registers in their own interests, to the injury not only of the rights of individuals but those of village communities. But with the help of such men as Bird and Thomason, all this was speedily to be corrected and an equitable settlement to be made. Bird was to be the pioneer. Thomason was yet young in the service. It was largely due to the labours of Bird that the cultivating classes of the Upper Provinces had their Charter of Rights in the next reign of Lord William Bentinck by Regulation IX of 1833. One reason for many of the blunders made in the early days of settlement was recognized by Lord Amherst to be the practical exclusion at the time of the better class of Indians from the higher



EARL AMHERST

GL
121

anks of revenue administration. In the early days of British rule this had been a necessity, as at the time of the grant of the Diwani, the Native functionaries taken over with the grant had not been distinguished for honesty of purpose or honesty of administration: their distinguishing traits, indeed, had been corruption and incapacity. The result of their exclusion was the employment of a lower order of Indians in a subordinate capacity as clerks and writers. The natural results followed: these men soon began to heap up enormous fortunes for themselves by a dexterous use of their opportunities. It was not till the time of Amherst's successor that much was done to change this state of things, but Lord Amherst was able to prepare the way for the change by a free expression of his opinion in dispatches to the Directors. Men like Malcolm and Metcalfe, moreover, had already shown what good results might be expected from a judicious admixture of the better class of Indians with Englishmen in the work of administration.

There was a similar problem in connexion with the judicial service, and the Directors wrote out to Amherst urging the greater employment of Native agency in the department of civil law, especially, and the greater use of Panchayats. As regards Bengal, Lord Amherst wrote that though strongly in favour of the principle, he thought they had gone as far as the safety of the public interests would permit. Munro in Madras, and Elphinstone in Bombay, had been again the pioneers in this movement, and both had achieved considerable success in their efforts to train and employ Native judges. Much of Elphinstone's success had been due to what came to be called the non-regulation system, which first took definite shape under Lord Amherst, and was eventually brought into force for all districts newly brought under British rule. One feature of this system was the extensive employment of military men in civil appointments due to the scarcity of civilians. A system that could thus bring to the front such men as Henry Lawrence, John Nicholson, and Outram, to mention only three of the many distinguished men who were destined afterwards to carve out a successful career for themselves, and win undying renown for their country,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

was undoubtedly an excellent one. That acute observer of men and things, Bishop Heber, who was in India during Amherst's administration, spoke enthusiastically of the dispatch and simplicity in the transaction of public business that resulted. The bishop was always a keen and strong critic of the policy of Government, but, unlike many of the partial critics of the present day, he gave full credit to the Government for honesty and rectitude of purpose, and his judgement, Government well knew, was always to be trusted. Of Bishop Heber it has been recorded that 'no official emissary was more welcome at the courts of princes and at the shrines of Hindus than the Lord Padri Sahib'.

There were certain engineering problems to be met. Engineering, indeed, as a branch of State policy, may be said to have commenced with Lord Amherst. Special attention was paid by him to the Western Jumna Canal, and the appointment of Colonel John Colvin as Superintendent of Irrigation for the Delhi District, marked practically the first departure in this most important department of administration in an agricultural country like India. The Western Jumna Canal had been originally made by the Emperor Tughlak Shah, as far back as the fourteenth century. It was largely improved under the Emperor Akbar, and a branch into Delhi was added by the Emperor Shah Jahan. But in these early days of Indian history, canals were constructed by the great Indian Rulers either for the improvement of their sporting estates or garden pleasaunces, or for the beautifying of their capitals; and the benefit such canals may have incidentally conferred on the agricultural community along the tracts by which they meandered was quite a secondary consideration. It was left to the British Rulers of India to make irrigation of agricultural lands their first thought. In the earlier days of British rule attention was chiefly paid to the improvement of the existing canals in the country, many of which were faulty in alignment, so much so that in many tracts of the country irrigation had been identified by the people with an increase of malaria. The regular construction of new canals on improved scientific lines practically commenced on any



large scale with the construction of the great Ganges Canal under Lord Hardinge and Lord Dalhousie. One special feature of this period was the settlement of wild regions recently brought within the sphere of British influence. Conspicuous success in this direction was achieved amongst the Mers of Merwara, and the Bhils of Khandesh. The success in each case was largely due to the personal influence of the British officers deputed for the purpose. In Merwara, various revolting practices, such as the sale of women and the crime of infanticide, were put down practically with the consent of the people themselves. From among the Mers a battalion of Mer soldiers was successfully raised. Under the admirable administration of Outram, who was one of the distinguished soldier-civilians of the day, the Bhils became orderly and attached to the British régime.

Much could not yet be attempted in the field of education. Colleges were, however, established at Agra and at Delhi. Even in these early days it is of interest to note that a certain tendency to Anglicization was to be observed. It was doubtless due to that tendency which is a marked feature of the Oriental towards imitation. Certainly the Japanese nation has been a conspicuous example of this tendency. It is recorded that some of the Indian princes amused their leisure hours with English literature, just, indeed, as many of them do to this day. The King of Oudh is said to have had a taste for European art as well as for Oriental philology. Many of the wealthy Natives of Calcutta spoke English fluently, and Bishop Heber made an entry in his journals to this effect: 'In the Bengali newspapers, of which there are two or three, politics are canvassed, the balance, I am told, leaning to Whiggism: and one of their leading men gave a great dinner not long since in honour of the Spanish Revolution.' Thus early did the intellectual thought of educated Bengal run to novelties in systems of Government. The great moral question of the day was Sati: in very many instances it had degenerated into a form of public entertainment. Preliminary steps towards its entire abolition were taken, and the opinions of learned Pandits were invited on the subject: but, further than this, Lord Amherst did not go,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

in this and other matters of the kind he trusted to the effects of time and the growing enlightenment of the people: it was thus left to his successor, Lord William Bentinck, to take decisive action. One curious practice, however, had been declared illegal: this was a practice known as *Dharna*, which may be best translated 'Dunning'. It consisted in a petitioner, eager to get his suit attended to, lying in front of the house of the man from whom he wanted to beg a favour or to get redress in case of a grievance, either until he got what he wanted, or until he actually died of starvation: his intention being that his death should be placed at the door of the person who refused him the boon he craved. Many social and moral problems still remain for solution even in these more enlightened days, and the Indian Government is often pressed by enthusiastic Englishmen, or earnest-minded Indians, to solve them by legislative enactments. This puts the Government in a very difficult position, as so many of these so-called social evils are inextricably bound up with religion: and the Government has, as a general rule, carefully to avoid any measures, apart from such as humanity dictates, that may be identified in the minds of the people with an interference with their religion. There are always agitators interested in stirring up the evil passions of the multitude, and ready to take advantage of any handle for fomenting disaffection against the Government. Indeed, even in the case of certain customs which have been brought within the compass of the penal code, the greatest tact has to be exercised in instituting prosecutions under that code. After all, if there is any real desire on the part of Indian reformers to mend or end certain social practices amongst the people of India, it is better that reforms should be instituted by spontaneous movements from within and among their own ranks, than by external pressure from without, for only thus are such reforms likely to be durable.

† One of the features of the last years of Lord Amherst's administration of India was a grand tour in the Upper Provinces. Touring is perhaps the only form of relief that a Governor-General can obtain from the extreme pressure of work. The only rest a man in such an office



EARL AMHERST

GL
125

can hope for is a change of occupation, and, after all, this is one of the best forms that rest from ordinary routine work can take, and so Lord Amherst found his tour in the Upper Provinces. Similarly, the Marquess Wellesley always attributed the good health that, on the whole, he was able to maintain in India, to the variety of his occupations. The primary object of the tour was pacification and settlement. The journey, as usual in those days, was made by boat up the Ganges for the greater part of the way. Lady Amherst always kept a diary while in India with her husband, and, like the journals which Bishop Heber kept, it throws considerable light on much of the history of the period. Lady Amherst was an exceedingly observant person and a picturesque writer. Even on her first arrival in Calcutta she had begun taking notes. She has described many visits she had made to places in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, and the friendly reception the visitors met with in the villages of Bengal. She was always keen on having side-lights thrown on Oriental ways and manners. Where she could not draw from her own observation, she listened to those who were likely to be well-informed. Thus she has recorded a conversation she once had with Captain, afterwards Sir John, Low, who told her a characteristic story illustrating the vast importance that Oriental dignitaries attach to precedence: he was once offered a lakh of rupees if he would allow the elephant of a certain person to precede that of another in a great religious procession. To this day British officials have to be present on the occasion of these great religious festivals, notably the Mohurram, to keep order, and it is no uncommon thing for a free fight to commence between rival processions, each claiming precedence of the other. The writer remembers one such in the Muhammadan city of Patna when several hundred elephants were out in a procession.

Lady Amherst recorded many of the incidents of this tour. One of the earliest incidents of the journey was the upsetting of the dispensary boat that was accompanying the party, containing a large store of medical necessities, no slight loss in a country where sudden sickness may come on at any moment. Indeed, Lady Amherst



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

had herself suffered at one time from an attack of cholera, although she had made light of it with her usual cheerful equanimity. On this occasion she humorously wrote : ' There goes a year's supply of calomel and tartar emetic.' The party seem to have met with many curious experiences. The appearance of the bodyguard of the English judge at Bhagalpur especially attracted attention. They were members of a peculiar tribe reputed to be ' remarkable for their love of the truth, their belief in witchcraft, and their custom of taking oaths on a cat's back'. At Benares they met a man who was holding the appointment of Senior Judge of the Court of Appeal, Mr. Brooke. He had been appointed to the Company's service as early as 1768, and had been fifty-eight years in India at the time of their visit. Bishop Heber also noticed this official, and made this entry in his journal, ' He is a very fair healthy old man, his manners singularly courteous and benevolent and his tone in speaking Hindustani and Persian such as marks a man who has been in the habit of conversing much with Natives of high rank.' The old man made one shrewd remark which especially struck Lady Amherst, ' You may live very well with the Hindus if you are always on your guard.' The description given by Bishop Heber of the fine old English judge might have been written of another fine old gentleman whom the writer well remembers in India, a Scotchman and a clergyman, Dr. Garden Fraser, whose record of life in India was even greater than that of the judge, for, after more than sixty years in the country, he died at the age of ninety-three still in harness. At Allahabad the party received a visit from the ex-Peshwa, Baji Rao. He had already been described to Lady Amherst, before she met him, by Sir John Low in these terms : ' He is one of the best-mannered Indians I ever saw. His conversation is superior, gentle, and temperate, his sole occupation at present is his worship and the rites of his country's gods.' The latter, a little touch that is generally characteristic of the devout Indians' favourite occupation at all periods of their life and especially at the close. Lady Amherst adds the following touch to the picture : ' His dress was uncommon, a small pointed gold turban, his diamonds and pearls were few, but large and splen-



did, his appearance and conversation were animated and sensible.'

The party were entertained at Cawnpur by the King of Oudh. If this potentate had not French officers any longer in his service, he had a French chef direct from Paris, and gave them a sumptuous breakfast. At Agra, Lord Amherst held a levée or Darbar. Scindia had been expected to come to present his respects, but had excused himself on the score of ill health—indeed, he died very soon after—and he sent his brother Hindu Rao, a name that often occurs in connexion with the famous siege of Delhi, where Hindu Rao's house was a conspicuous feature on the ridge. Hindu Rao was one of those Mahrattas who could be pleasant and courteous enough when he pleased, but could also be merciless when occasion, he thought, demanded it. Lady Amherst was at a later period told the following story about him: 'Some of his servants having once presented themselves to him and petitioned for arrears of pay, he had them all mercilessly massacred by his armed retainers.' Lady Amherst, with that courtesy and kindness and thoughtfulness that has always distinguished the consorts of the British Rulers of India, held a reception for certain Mahratta ladies, who observe far less seclusion than do the Hindu ladies of other nationalities or Muhammadan ladies. Scindia's wife, Baiza Bai, had sent these ladies as a deputation to Lady Amherst. There are two accounts extant of this assembly, one written by Lady Amherst in her usual amusing manner, the other written in Persian by one of Hindu Rao's wives for the benefit of Baiza Bai: another account was also given in a Gwalior vernacular paper. At Fatehpur Sikri an old Pindari chieftain, who might well have been the original of Sir Alfred Lyall's picturesque and poetic study, entitled *The old Pindari*, came to visit the party. At Bhartpur, the young Raja visited them and all the party dined with him. At Dig, Lady Amherst makes a caustic entry in her diary when she notes the different treatment accorded to infant girls from that accorded to monkeys with which the place swarmed, 'Monkeys are held sacred; female infants are mercilessly put to death.' The party also visited Delhi. The Mogul Emperor had learnt wisdom



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

since his refusal some twelve years before to waive any of the customary etiquette, had prevented the Marquess of Hastings from visiting him. This time he received Lord Amherst courteously enough and said to him as he entered his presence, 'As you are my friend, as you are my protector, as you are my master, I ask you to sit down.' Lady Amherst notes with some pride that 'Lord Amherst was the only person, except the Heir-Apparent, who has ever sat in the King's presence'. The Mogul even returned the visit, and he was met on the way in great state by the Governor-General. The old Begum made a curious request to Lord Amherst that all visitors to Delhi should pay her tribute.

The party eventually arrived at the objective of their journey, Simla. Some idea of the state they travelled in may be given from the fact that it required 1,700 coolies and more to get the baggage and party up the hill. From Simla, Lord Amherst dispatched a mission to the court of Ranjit Singh. A member of the mission has given the following graphic description of the appearance of 'The Lion of the Punjab', 'When mounted on his high-bred horse, his phantom face, and birdlike limbs, his long hoary beard, and withered form, pictured death on a pale horse.' This visit to Simla was of importance, as it was practically the inauguration of the place as the summer capital of the Government of India. Lord Amherst was the first Governor-General who made it a place of retreat from the discomforts of the plains. The party stayed here only for three months, and then proceeded to commence their long and hot journey back to Calcutta. Only those who have experienced the fierce heats of Northern India in June can realize what a journey commencing in that month, as their return journey did, must have meant in the way of discomfort and fatigue to the whole party : and in addition to the heat, they had to contend with a dreaded epidemic of cholera along the route they had to take. Naturally, they were unable to keep all their engagements on their return journey up to date, and an incident occurred which illustrates, as well as anything else, the sudden and impulsive outbursts of passion to which the Oriental mind is at times liable. The Nawab



EARL AMHERST

GL
129

of Murshidabad had already started in his State barge, which to this day forms one of the most picturesque features of the river that runs under the walls of the palace, to meet Lord Amherst, when he received the news that the visit had been postponed for a fortnight. What happened has been thus recorded, 'He flew into such a violent rage that it resembled frenzy. He tore off a fine turban with jewels and threw it into the river. Two rings off his fingers shared the same fate; some valuable filigree work—in short every valuable he could lay his hands on—was thrown overboard. He stamped and raved like a madman and no one could pacify him. He threatened to cut off his beard and eyebrows and make a Faqir of himself. Mr. Melville says in his rage he destroyed property to the value of 50,000 rupees—his own to be sure.' Similar outbursts have not been unknown in the case of chieftains in Northern India in more recent days. The writer well remembers an incident where a great Mahratta chieftain ground a valuable gold watch to pieces beneath his heel when informed that arrangements were incomplete for his reception on a certain historic occasion. The party eventually returned in safety to Calcutta, and Lord Amherst, who had been created Earl Amherst of Arakan for his services in the Burmese and the Bhartpur campaigns, finally retired in favour of his successor in March, 1828. He died at the advanced age of eighty-four in 1857.

Lord Amherst may not have been a great personality, but he showed statesmanlike qualities and was, as his great popularity among all classes showed, a man of winning personality, always kind and courteous to all, and it is recorded that he left India amidst heartfelt expressions of regret.



CHAPTER V

THE COMPANY AS A GOVERNING AND NON-TRADING POWER

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK, 1774-1839

As was usual with the cadets of noble houses in England, Bentinck entered the Army^c at an early age. He was appointed to the Coldstream Guards as an ensign in 1791. He served with some distinction during the Napoleonic Wars on the Continent. He was on the staff of the Duke of York in the Netherlands for some time; and was afterwards attached to the head quarters of the Army of Marshal Suwaroff which was operating in the North of Italy. It was while he was in Italy that he appears to have first conceived the idea of assisting the cause of Italian Unity and Independence; and at a later period he took an active part in trying to promote it. He was only twenty-nine when he was offered and accepted the appointment of Governor of Madras in 1803. The reasons for his appointment appear to have been that he was supposed to have exceptional military experience; and it was thought that he would be a useful man in helping to thwart French designs upon India. His appointment coincided with the commencement of the great struggle between the British and the Mahrattas which had been largely the outcome of French intrigues and ambitions.

Bentinck held office as Governor of Madras from 1803 to 1807. The words he wrote when he assumed office show that, though matters of local concern were to occupy his attention chiefly during his short tenure of office, he knew that he was entering upon a difficult task, rendered not easier by the factious spirit of opposition manifested by his Council. On this subject he had written, 'I am quite aware of the arduous and important task which



I have undertaken. The divided state of this Government, and the opposition and counteraction which my noble predecessor received, are circumstances much to be lamented, and which tend to destroy all the vigour and efficiency so imperiously required in the management of this great unsettled territory. I am determined, however, to do what is right, uninfluenced by party or prejudice, careless and fearless of the result.'

One of the most prominent among the questions he had to deal with was the Land Question, but in this matter he was especially fortunate in having the benefit and experience of Sir Thomas Munro, who was mainly instrumental in getting the Ryotwari system introduced into the Province. The policy thus pursued was the converse of that pursued in Bengal where the class of Zamindars had been established, or, at any rate, recognized and strengthened, by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. In Madras, no indefeasible rights of tenure were given, and the class of cultivators was recognized as the class identified with the soil, and to be directly dealt with. The Directors had wished to have the Bengal system introduced, but Bentinck had written a strong remonstrance in these terms: 'It was apparent to him that the creation of Zamindars where no Zamindars before existed, was neither calculated to improve the condition of the lower orders of people, nor politically wise, with reference to the future security of this Government.'

Another question of importance, and one that eventually led to his recall, was the event known as the Vellore Mutiny, in which the Sepoys of various regiments rose against their European officers and killed some thirteen of them and some men. What gave this event its special importance was that it emanated from the place chosen as the residence of the family of Tipu Sultan, the late Muhammadan Ruler of Mysore; it was thought by some at the time that there was some connexion between the family and the mutiny. There were others who had good authority for holding that certain military orders of a somewhat vexatious character for men holding the views on caste and religion, held by the average Indian Sepoys, were the sole cause. These orders, consisting principally of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

an alteration in the head-dress with especial reference to a new turban, and of disallowing caste marks and ear-rings to be worn on parade, had for their principal object the making the Sepoys appear smarter on parade. The suspicious mind of the Hindu Sepoy, however, saw in them an attack on his caste and on his religion. The mutiny was promptly suppressed, but not till after much blood had been shed: the orders about dress were then cancelled. There were many points of resemblance between this earlier mutiny and the later and far greater one of 1857. There was first, the old ruling family dispossessed of its old power, and not unnaturally discontented, sufficient, therefore, to form a centre of intrigue for the restoration of that power. There were secondly, the religious fears of the Sepoys aroused by certain impolitic military regulations. Sir George Barlow was acting as Governor-General at the time of this event, which is said to have sent a shock of insecurity through the Empire.

The sequel of the Vellore Mutiny was the recall of Lord William Bentinck from his post. The Court of Directors were not satisfied with his attitude on the occasion, and a censure was conveyed to him in the following terms: 'While recognizing his uprightness and regard for our service, at the same time, after regarding all the considerations connected with the business of Vellore, we find ourselves unable to continue that confidence in him which it is so necessary for a person holding his situation to possess.' Bentinck complained bitterly of his treatment, and some time after his return home, he presented a memorial to the Court stating his case: 'I have been severely injured,' he wrote, 'in my character and my feelings: for these injuries I ask reparation if indeed any reparation can atone for feelings so deeply aggrieved, and a character so unjustly compromised in the eyes of the world.' This they refused at the time to consider, and it was not till eighteen years after this event, that they made him full amends by entrusting to his hands the charge, not of a single Province alone, but of the whole Empire of India. The Directors appear to have had some justification for their opinion about Bentinck's management of the case, especially in regard to his lack



LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

133

of prescience in the matter. It appears that the Sepoys two months before they mutinied had presented a remonstrance to the Commander-in-Chief about the shape of a new turban; he had called the Governor's attention to the matter, but the Governor had taken no action in the way of making an inquiry into the grievance, but had allowed matters to proceed. Whatever blame therefore, attached to the military authorities must be shared by him. One little incident that took place shortly after Bentinck's return to England, showed his kindly feelings to those who had served him well in India. He sent his old Indian secretary, Mutiah, a gold snuff-box in memory of their official connexion. His experiences while Governor of Madras were not without their influence on Lord William Bentinck's subsequent character and career, and in a letter he wrote to the Marquess Wellesley not long after the retirement from office of that great Ruler, he strikes the key-note of his own future career in India, when the time came for him to undertake the Supreme Government of the country in his turn. Speaking of the Feudatory System of Lord Wellesley as conducive to the welfare and happiness of the people where it was in force, he wrote, 'That system, one of the noblest efforts of the wisdom and patriotism of a subject which has founded British greatness upon Indian happiness, demands in a particular manner the thanks and applause of his country.' The foundation of British greatness upon Indian happiness was to be Lord William Bentinck's own special work.

On his return from India, Bentinck was again actively employed with the Army, and took part in the Peninsular campaign. He was present at the famous battle of Corunna, which cost the life of that gallant soldier, Sir John Moore: and at a later period he conducted some operations on the east coast of Spain in co-operation with Wellington, in command of a division: but these operations do not appear to have added very much to his military reputation, though they did have the effect of diverting the French Marshal, Suchet, from attacking Wellington. One appointment he held throws some light on the great work England performed for some of the smaller peoples of Europe in preserving their independence from the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

encroachments of Napoleon. He held command of the English Army which had been stationed in Sicily for such a purpose, and for a space of three years he was practically Governor of the island. His administrative faculties came into play while he held this appointment, and he was able to be of some service to Sicily in drawing up a constitution for the island. And it is recorded that he drew up one which gave general satisfaction and averted grave dynastic and popular trouble. The great Napier, who had commanded a regiment at Corunna, gave his opinion of Bentinck on one occasion in these terms: 'Bentinck is a man of resolution, capacity and spirit, just in his actions, and abhorring oppression, but of a sanguine impetuous disposition.' This latter characteristic was illustrated by his ambition to help on the work of the deliverance of Italy from foreign domination. Fired by the idea of the emancipation of Italy, he had evolved a wild scheme of assisting it with British troops. It was a quixotic scheme as described by the Duke of Wellington himself, and came to nothing. Bentinck had even gone so far as to issue two Proclamations, which anticipated by nearly half a century the establishment of Italian unity: this course of action had naturally caused some embarrassment to his country.

His command came to an end in 1815, just before peace was restored to Europe by the great victory of the Duke of Wellington over Napoleon at Waterloo. He returned to England, and for a time took up a Parliamentary career, but he remained unemployed in the public service. Having been offered in 1819, a second term of office as Governor of Madras, he declined it, as he did not consider the offer sufficient amends for his previous recall in 1807, which he still continued to consider most unjust. When the Marquess of Hastings returned from India after his term of office, Bentinck applied to be nominated as his successor, but his claims were ignored. It is interesting to note that the great historian of India, Mill, thought him the best candidate, and he had stated that every one else thought so too, but he feared he had no chance. Bentinck had always the reputation of being a man of very independent character: this was largely due to his extreme



LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

135
SL

frankness, a trait which his friend Louis Philippe had especially noted in him. Anyhow it would appear that he was too independent for the Ministry of the day. Thus it came about that Lord Amherst received the appointment. It was not till 1827 that his opportunity came; the Court began to realize that there was an absolute necessity for economy and financial reform in Indian administration, and their thoughts naturally turned to the man who had always shown special care in regulating finances, and who had won the reputation during his tenure of Indian office of being a reforming and peaceful Ruler. And so, in 1827, the Directors selected Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General of India, in succession to Lord Amherst: and Bentinck, realizing the offer to be an *amende honorable* which he might well accept, agreed to take up the post.

In his great career as Governor-General of India, Bentinck was to rank next to Warren Hastings as a distinguished legislator. His whole policy was directed towards the promotion of the welfare and happiness of the people. There were two men whose influence, combined with Bentinck's own predilections and sympathy, did much to guide his policy as Governor-General of India into the direction in which it eventually took shape, that of granting to the people of the country a wider share than they had hitherto had in the administration of public affairs. Much of his legislation, indeed, was directed to this end. These were, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was still pursuing his beneficent work in India, and who was destined to hold the reins of supreme power for a time in his own hands after Bentinck, and Lord Ellenborough, who at the time was President of the Board of Control in England, and himself afterwards a Ruler of India. Both of these men were keenly interested in the welfare of the country. Sir Charles Metcalfe, especially, held very strong views on the form of Government best suited to the people of India. A writer who is generally recognized as an authority on Indian affairs, but whose judgement in this particular case is hardly to be relied on, has recently written in the *Nineteenth Century*, arguing that much of the trouble and difficulty that the Rulers of India are experiencing in the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

present day is due to what he has described as too great an Occidentalizing tendency in the administrative machinery of Government. He has suggested a return to more primitive methods of administration. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that the Government should now confine its task to that of the preservation of peace and order, leaving the practical executive machinery of Government to be manipulated by Native agency alone, or, as he has expressed it, 'leaving the people to work out their own salvation on their own lines.' In other words, Government was to stand out only as the policeman. This would practically mean that India would be governed on Oriental methods, and the Government would merely be a 'Government of sentry boxes'. Sir Charles Metcalfe and another distinguished authority whose acquaintance with problems of Indian administration no one will deny, Sir John Malcolm, held saner views. They held that the ideal Government for India was that where the best Native agency was employed under the guidance and control of Europeans. Sir Charles Metcalfe had expressed his views in the following terms: 'The best form of Government with a view to the welfare of the Natives of India in their present state, I believe to be that which is most simple and most free from artificial institutions. The best form of Government with a view to the maintenance of British dominion in India, I believe to be that which is most conducive to a union of Powers and most free from the elements of collision and counteraction; Native functionaries in the first instance in all departments, European superintendents.' Lord Ellenborough had also the welfare of the people of India at heart, and he had written in these terms: 'We have a great moral duty to perform to the people of India. We must, if possible, give them a good and permanent Government. In doing this we confer a greater benefit upon the people of this country than in sacrificing the interests of India to the apparent present interests of England. The real interests of both countries are the same.' It was to be Lord Bentinck's mission to give effect to these views. And that system of administration, whereby the best Native agency is united with European control, which forms the feature of the Govern-



ment of India in the present day, largely, if not indeed mainly, owes its origin to his initiative. The praise awarded to him by Sir Charles Trevelyan is not greater than he deserves : ' To Lord William Bentinck belongs the great praise of having placed our dominion in India on its proper foundation in the recognition of the great principle that India is to be governed for the benefit of the Indian, and that the advantages which we derive from it should only be such as are incidental to, and inferential from, that course of proceeding.'

It has been already noted that one of the special reasons for the selection of Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General of India had been the necessity for financial reforms. Naturally, therefore, the first measures of Bentinck's administration were those taken in the direction of effecting economy. He found expenditure exceeding receipts. His predecessor had indeed managed the finances well, and had succeeded in leaving them on a fairly sound basis : but the Empire had expanded with his rule, and the expansion had brought financial difficulties in its train, as might have been indeed expected. The first question that came up before Bentinck was a reduction in military allowances. For some years the Army had been in receipt of a kind of bonus known by the Mahratta name of Bhatta; this had originally been intended to cover the extra expenditure that was entailed on active service. It had, however, come to be regarded as a right even in peace time. The measure Bentinck had to enforce of a reduction of one half in the amount of this extra allowance was naturally a very unpopular one with the Army. It had not commended itself either to Bentinck's own judgement, for he considered that the small saving effected was hardly commensurate with the annoyance caused to the officers. His own personal character came out very favourably at this crisis. Magnanimity was one of its most marked features, and he displayed this trait with excellent effect on this occasion. At a time when attacks were being made upon him from all sides, and particularly in the columns of the Calcutta Press, he declined to take any notice of them. His attitude towards the Press of his day was a significant one, and not without

its lessons to future Rulers of India. Of course it was the European Press almost entirely that the early administrators of India had to reckon with: but Bentinck's attitude would have been equally applicable to a Native Press. He had once said that he knew of no subject that the Press might not freely discuss; and though he might have put a stop once and for all to these caustic comments by the repressive methods which were still at the disposal of the Rulers of India, he made no use of these powers, so long as the matter was still under discussion: but, once the final orders of the Court of Directors had been received, he realized that the season for discussion was passed, and he then issued a minute, or ordinance, as it would be called, forbidding further Press comments on the affair. This was the one solitary occasion when he interfered with the liberty of the Press. In addition to this reduction of extra allowances, Bentinck made considerable reductions in the military establishments of the three Presidencies of Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay.

For the settlement of the Land Revenue of the North-West Provinces Bentinck had the good fortune to have ready to his hand that pioneer in this particular and important department of administration in those provinces, Mr. Bird: he was the forerunner of that other distinguished officer who has been called 'the Prince of Land Administrators', Mr. Thomason. The principles on which the settlement were carried out are recorded as having been equally conducive to the improving resources of the State and the growing prosperity and happiness of the people. The great Settlement of Central India, commenced by Sir John Malcolm, was only fully completed under Bentinck's administration. Another question that required Bentinck's attention was the checking of the system under which opium produced in Native territory, especially that produced in the Malwa State, could be sold in China at rates below those which opium under direct Government control fetched. The old practice, whereby this opium was conveyed by a circuitous route to Karachi, and thence via Diu and Daman in vessels flying the Portuguese flag, was put a stop to. Licences were issued for its direct conveyance to Bombay. This was a regula-



tion of traffic rather than an interference with the opium-producing rights of the Native States, and had a beneficial effect on the revenues of the country. Few features of the landscape are more picturesque than the wide expanses of country covered by the opium-producing poppy, when it is in full bloom, as it is in the spring of the year, with its profusion of white flowers. The question of opium is still a vexed question. The thriving state of the cultivators in the tracts where the cultivation of the poppy is carried on, and the beneficial effects of the small and minute doses taken on the physique of the people of the low-lying and marshy tracts of Bengal, where its malaria-resisting powers are known and appreciated, would appear to be arguments in favour of its cultivation not being hastily stopped. There is hardly a man over forty in Bengal, and indeed in other parts of the country, especially in the jungly and malarious tracts, who does not find a daily fid of opium almost a necessity to keep him up to the mark. When taken in this way, and not smoked, it is by no means that degrading luxury that it has sometimes been described. The writer well remembers one old gentleman who used regularly to attend certain committees on which he served. He always arrived a little late; and the same excuse was invariably given, 'I had to take my morning allowance.' Every one knew what he meant, and every one knew it was an absolute necessity in his case, and certainly it had not impaired his powers, either mental or physical: his opinions were always shrewd and to the point. The ultimate effect of all the measures taken was that the revenue showed a surplus of two crores of rupees, instead of a deficit of one crore. But it must be borne in mind, as the historian has shown, that 'these measures of detail would have availed little without a great reform of principle in the systematic employment of Natives of India in administrative offices, which had hitherto been reserved exclusively for Englishmen.

In order to remedy the unsatisfactory state of things that had arisen, due to the fact that the Provincial Courts, chiefly Courts of Appeal and Circuit, burdened with an excess of duties, had proved unable to get through their work, and had become proverbial for their dilatoriness,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Magistrates and Collectors were placed under the supervision of Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit, who were to make frequent tours within their jurisdiction, and to be in constant touch with the people. In order to facilitate this, they were deprived of some of their judicial functions, and a larger employment of Native judicial officers was effected. Many of these measures had been decided on before Bentinck arrived in India, under his immediate predecessor, Lord Amherst; but he gave his cordial support to them, and supported every project that might give increased dignity and confidence to the Native Judges. The natural effect of such a measure was to secure the co-operation of the Natives of India in the administration of Justice, and to conduce to economy and dispatch in the disposal of business.

Another very important part of Bentinck's administration was the suppression of the Thags. The two names by which these secret assassins were known, namely, Cheats and Stranglers, form a combination of words which exactly hits off their characteristics. They lured unwary travellers to secret spots and then strangled them with silk handkerchiefs. The name Thag was as much a name of ill-omen in India at this time as was the name of Garrotter in the streets of London almost half a century ago. It was a criminal organization on a religious basis, as so many organizations in the East are, and the profession was an hereditary one. As early as the seventeenth century, the French traveller, Tavernier, mentions the stranglers of the highway as one of the dangers of travel in the dominions of the Mogul. It appears probable that they had at first confined their operations to the immediate neighbourhood of Delhi, but they afterwards spread throughout Central India and the Deccan during the anarchy that prevailed in the eighteenth century. Their organization was completely broken up by the measures taken by Bentinck. The chief officer to whom the honour belongs of causing the crime of Thaggi to disappear, was Major, afterwards Colonel, Sleeman, who was given a special appointment as coadjutor and assistant to the Governor-General's agent in the Nerbudda territories, Mr. F. C. Smith. One of the most interesting books on Indian subjects ever written



is that entitled *Rambles and Recollections* by this officer. The operations extended over six years and over 2,000 Thags were arrested during this period, of whom some 1,500 were put to death or transported for life. A reformatory was established at Jabalpur for training the children of these hereditary assassins into better ways of earning a living. A department still exists which for long was known as the Department of Thaggi and Dakaiti, now as the Department for Criminal Investigation, with a Director at its head. A newspaper, whose authority is generally recognized as unimpeachable, has recently stated that there have been signs in Southern India of late that appear to point to a revival of this practice with the use of up-to-date accessories, such as chloroform. Youths wearing jewellery are said to have been inveigled into houses specially hired, and there disposed of. The vapouring of the worst section of the modern Native Press, advocating huge holocausts to the dread Goddess, Kali, in Northern India, may be taken for what it is worth, but there is no doubt that were the strong arm of Government once removed many of these cruel and degrading practices would spring into existence once more.

The next reform was the abolition of Sati. This was quite as much an act of humanity as was the abolition of Thaggi. Sati is a term strictly applicable to the person and not to the rite, meaning, 'a pure and virtuous woman'—a wife who completes a life of uninterrupted wifely devotion by the act called in Sanskrit Saha-Gamana, in English, accompanying her husband's dead body on its pilgrimage to the next world. There was a marked contrast in the attitude of the people over these two questions: the Thags were suppressed with the full acquiescence of the people: Sati was abolished largely in opposition to the feelings of the people. The policy of Bentinck in thus suppressing this cruel rite was not contrary to the pledges given by the Company to respect all the customs of the people. These pledges have always been scrupulously observed, and the only departures from the policy that have been taken have been necessitated by an overwhelming sense of an obligation to humanity. With regard to Sati, the feeling of the English Rulers of India was that an outrage on



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

humanity, not sanctioned by God, and disapproved of by the higher conscience of the people of India themselves, was being perpetrated. Amongst the people themselves were found a few reformers, men like Dwarka Nath Tagore, and Ram Mohan Roy, who strove to convince their countrymen that Sati was not enjoined by the Code of Manu, and that it was opposed to the gentle, benign spirit of their original faith. The disapproval of the British authorities in India had been continuously shown from the earliest period of British rule. The Marquess Wellesley had tried to obtain a judgement from the Nizâmat Adâlat condemning it, but he only succeeded in obtaining certain suggestions for modifying its cruelty, and no action could be taken. Lord Minto issued a circular embodying these suggestions into an ordinance. Down to the arrival of Lord William Bentinck the average number of Satis in Bengal alone was about 800 a year, and Lady Amherst, in the diary she kept while her husband was Governor-General, notes how Sati, with many, had degenerated into a species of entertainment and had become a public and degrading spectacle. Lord Amherst himself had expressed an opinion that nothing but apprehensions of evils infinitely greater than those arising from the existence of the practice should induce the British to tolerate it for a single day. What the evil effects feared were is made clear from a letter written by the Marquess Hastings to Bentinck, in which he wrote that fear of decisive action had been hitherto largely due to its possible consequences on the loyalty of the Native Army. Bentinck's own attitude of mind is seen in his remark, 'To abstain from action would be making himself guilty of the crime of multiplied murder.'

The writer of a modern novel, which has had, and still has a considerable vogue, but which contains many misleading statements and mischievous innuendoes, has made one extraordinary statement to this effect, 'The British Government in India is ruthless.' True, he applies the expression, not to the personnel, but to the machinery of Government, but it amounts to much the same thing. For he means by it that those who set the machinery in motion are unintelligent and mechanical in their action, and unobservant of the possible effects that may follow from



measures they sanction. There is some excuse for this writer, as he has evidently not been conversant with Indian affairs at first hand. Another writer, who might be supposed to be better informed on Indian affairs, has made this surprising statement, 'From Bentinck onwards to the Mutiny a perfunctory and mechanical method of Government had become almost universal, and as the great surprise of the events of the Mutiny of 1857 proved, affairs were conducted in a negligent and perfunctory manner.' No statements could be wider of the mark. No Government in the world has ever been more careful in its procedure to ascertain, as far as it possibly can, the best European and Native opinion on its measures than has the Government of India. Bentinck's action, especially in this particular matter of the prohibition of Sati, was the very reverse of being negligent or perfunctory. On the contrary, his whole procedure was marked by the greatest deliberation; and nothing was done precipitately. First, the feelings of the Bengal Army were ascertained, and the fears of a mutiny were dispelled. Then the opinion of the Nizâmat Adâlat was obtained: four out of the five judges at once gave their opinion in favour of its abolition; after the lapse of a year, the fifth judge also gave in his adhesion, thus making the judges' opinion unanimous. The opinions of police officers on the general attitude of the people were satisfactory. This preliminary inquiry completed, a reference was made to the Council of the Governor-General, and Bentinck expressed this hope that, 'The members of the Council will partake of the perfect confidence which I have in the expediency and safety of the abolition of Sati.' Then followed the promulgation of the regulations declaring the practice of Sati to be illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.

In 1830 the Act was extended to Madras and Bombay. A few insignificant disturbances were created by excited Bengalis, and they endeavoured to fight the matter out in the courts, in the way most dear to them, by litigation. A test case was submitted to the Privy Council. The case was regarded by the Privy Council purely in its judicial aspects and a decision was given against the appellants. Petitions were then sent to the King, but they were

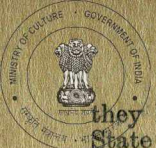


RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

neutralized by counter-petitions from eminent leaders of native opinion, like Dwarka Nath Tagore, and Ram Mohan Roy. The principle on which the British Government takes action in such matters as that of Sati, has been well expressed by the historian in these words :—‘ A solemn and imperative duty rests upon us to put an end to cruel and brutalizing acts wherever committed under our jurisdiction, and for these we cannot allow either religion or long usage to be an excuse as a safeguard.’ How far religion had sanctioned Sati is an open question, but it was not for the British Government to argue whether it was so or not. This was the work of the Indians themselves, and their great reformers argued^o that it had not the sanction of ancient Hindu practice as found in the Vedas. It was sufficient for the British Government that it was an outrage on humanity, and as such to be suppressed. The lengthy minute of Lord William Bentinck on the subject is a sufficient testimony to the care and attention he devoted to the whole subject before taking the decisive action which he eventually took. This principle again came into force under a later Ruler of India, the Marquess of Lansdowne. He was called upon to take legislative action to check the acts of cruelty that were inseparable from early child marriage, and the outcome of his action was ‘The Age of Consent Bill’.

With the renewal of the Company’s Charter in 1833, the current had at last definitely set in in the direction of a more liberal educational policy towards the people of the country than had hitherto been the case. Twenty years had passed since, at the renewal of the Charter in 1813, it had been determined that the enlightenment of the people of India was to be an essential part of the policy of the Government of India. Nothing, however, had hitherto been attempted on any large scale. Mr. Adam, it is recorded, during his brief tenure of office had appointed a Committee of Public Instruction, which had been instructed ‘to suggest measures for the better education of the people in useful knowledge, and in the Arts and Sciences of the West’. The Parliamentary grants which had been made had been utilized partly for the revival of Oriental literature through the medium of the printing-press; and



they had partly been devoted to the upkeep of the two State educational institutions that existed at the time, namely, the Muhammadan Madrasa at Calcutta, and the Hindu College for Pandits at Benares. What State education, therefore, there was, was being conducted entirely on Oriental lines. But there had been no definite end in view, and matters had been allowed practically to drift. And so they continued to do until the assumption of office by Lord William Bentinck. An important question now came to the front on the determination of which several other questions depended, and notably these three : the admission on any large scale of Indians into the higher grades of public service : the dissemination of culture among the upper classes of Indians with a view to their admission on terms of equality and friendship into the best English society : and the question of the emancipation of the Press, and the creation and strengthening of a healthy public opinion. On all these questions Lord William Bentinck himself held very decided opinions. The great question that had to be settled was in what medium was public instruction in the higher branches of learning to be conveyed to the people of India. Bentinck's own sympathies were in the direction of making English this medium. He hoped that a knowledge of English literature and science, and especially a sound colloquial knowledge of English on the part of the Indian community, would help to promote that object which lay so close to his heart, the creation of a common bond of union between the Rulers and the ruled, which ordinarily may be expected to follow from the use of a common language. It is recorded also that on one occasion he had invited the head master of a school at Sagar to visit Calcutta at his expense, that he might become acquainted with European ways and civilization. He had, moreover, the support of the opinion of that wise and experienced statesman, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had written to him to this effect : 'The English language seems to me the channel through which we are most likely to convey improvement to the Natives of India.' One of his most influential advisers was Mr., afterwards Lord, Macaulay, who was a member of the Supreme Council, and President of the Board of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Education at Calcutta. He had expressed his opinion thus, 'It is possible to make the people of this country good English scholars, and all our efforts ought to be directed to this end.' What finally settled the matter was the selection of English to be the official language of the country.

And so the fiat went forth in the form of a resolution emanating from the Governor-General, that 'The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the Natives of India, and that the funds appropriated to education would be best employed on English education alone'. This was but the natural corollary. There was a good deal of opposition to be encountered, as there was a strong party known as Orientalists, who were anxious that all higher education should be given through the medium of Sanskrit and Arabic. There was a good deal to be said for their point of view, but it is quite evident that had their views prevailed it would have postponed for many a day the admission of Indians on any large scale into the higher branches of the public service. It has been well said : 'Mere students of Sanskrit and Arabic would never have been admitted to the same share with Englishmen in the Government of India that they now possess as fluent masters of the English language.' The decision therefore was one that Indians themselves have reason to be thankful for. They now indeed possess a larger share in the administration of the affairs of their country than Englishmen; and every year, under the liberal policy that actuates the British Rulers of India, that proportion is being largely increased. This has not been the only advantage that Indians have acquired from thus having all the culture of the West rendered available to them. To it they owe the higher estimation in which they are held by English gentlemen, and the greater opportunities they have of admittance into the best English society, an opportunity of which the better classes among them have not been slow to mark their full appreciation. Not the least of the many other advantages of the new departure to Indians themselves has been the opening up to them of new avenues of employment in the great professions, amongst others, of Law and Medicine. In the one they are now competing successfully



with Englishmen and attaining to the very highest judicial posts which Government has in its power to bestow on them ; in the other, they are able to be of inestimable service in relieving the great mass of suffering amongst their countrymen far more effectively than they ever could have been had they remained in the old beaten tracks of the ancient and primitive practice of medicine.

In all new movements there cannot but be mistakes ; these indeed are but stepping-stones to better things. In this matter of the decision to adopt English as the medium through which all higher education in India was to be given or obtained, the mistake made was to make it the sole medium. In this connexion, the words of Sir John Strachey in his most valuable work, *India*, are weighty and wise : ' No one will doubt that it was right to encourage the study of the English language ; for a Native of India there is plainly no other key by which he can unlock the stores of Western knowledge, and without it he cannot hope to take any prominent part in the higher branches of the public administration ; whether it was right, apart from the higher claims of science to assign to the classical literature of England the almost exclusive position which it has occupied in the Indian educational system and almost to ignore the existence of the literatures of the East, is another matter. A Hindu would often reap more advantage from the *Mahabharata*, and the Plays of Kalidasa, than from *Paradise Lost*, and *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. A Muhammadan youth would appreciate the noble poetry of Arabia more than that of England. The *Shahnama* would be more profitable to him than translations of Homer, and he would probably learn more wisdom from Omar Khayyam than from European philosophers. No one will now sympathize with the contempt with which Lord Macaulay treated the ancient literature of the East. Whatever may be its value in comparison with our own, it abounds in works which rank among the remarkable achievements of human genius.' The ideal would doubtless be a harmonious combination of both literatures, Western and Oriental. That such a combination is possible without at the same time making the education an unpractical one, the writer has had abundant opportunity of testing in



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

his own experience. A writer in a recent number of *The Spectator* has said: 'It is astonishing how seldom our administrative methods or administrative instruments in India are justly arraigned.' This is especially true of the charge so constantly levelled against the Government of India of having encouraged excessive Anglicization in its system of State education. The writer of an article in a recent number of *The Nineteenth Century*, already referred to, has said: 'Western ways may prove suited to the climate and situation of the Japanese: anyhow their introduction is not due to the policy and power of aliens, but has been deliberately adopted by the Japanese themselves.' Thus he concedes to Japan what he denies to India. And yet the analogy between the two cases is very clear. It has not been the policy of the Government of India that has led to that Anglicization in life and manners, and to a certain extent in thought, that is so marked a feature of the India of to-day, but the predilections of the people themselves. There is abundant evidence to show, and this hostile critic of Government himself acknowledges it, that for many years before the time of Bentinck the tide had been setting strongly in this direction. Lady Amherst, amongst other shrewd observers, noted the fact in her diary.

Bengal thought and intellect has always been a power in India, and its influence has been felt for many generations throughout India, for the Bengali is as ubiquitous in India as is the Scotchman in the British Empire. This influence is a factor that must be taken into consideration in treating of this subject. From among Indians themselves a large and powerful class of social reformers sprang into prominence during the early years of the nineteenth century. One of the chiefs of the new movement was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the practical founder of that religious organization known as the Brahmo Samaj, and of which the illustrious Bengali, Keshav Chandra Sen, was afterwards to be the leading exponent. A still more powerful offshoot of this society is that now known as the Arya Samaj, which differs from the earlier organization in having a political as well as a religious basis, if indeed the political element does not entirely overshadow the religious. It is recorded that



Raja Ram Mohan Roy urged upon Lord Amherst the necessity of giving young India a thorough knowledge of the Occidental sciences through the medium of English. The letter which he wrote is stated to have been placed in Lord Amherst's hands through the agency of Bishop Heber. A famous Bengal Pandit, Sivanath Shastri, has recently brought out a very interesting life of a celebrated Bengali reformer, Ram Tanu Lahiri, who was a disciple of Raja Ram Mohan Roy; Sir Roper Lethbridge has edited the work. Ram Tanu was known as 'The Arnold of Bengal': and the writer of this sketch well remembers, from his own personal experience, the influence he had on the rising generation of the Bengal of his day. In the course of his narrative, Pandit Sivanath Shastri has said: 'It was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who opened the eyes of his countrymen to the benefits of English education. It was he who turned their faces from the East towards the West. In spite of his great regard for everything Oriental, he held up the Occidental's love of science, of moral excellence, and his desire to promote the welfare of all as worthy of imitation.' It was then no more in the power of the British Government to set back the tide that now began to run so strongly in the direction of Anglicization, as it may be called for want of a better word, than it was in their power to check the political expansion of the Empire. A great Indian notable has been credited with saying: 'The religion of the Paramount Power must prevail in the end.' Whatever truth may underlie this statement, no one will be prepared to deny that in the East especially, where the imitative faculty is strongly developed, the language of the Predominant Power must prevail. Had the French succeeded in their ambition of becoming the masters of India, who can doubt that the language and manners of France would have become even more marked features in the India of to-day, than are those of England? If there is one thing more than another that strikes visitors to the French possessions in India, it is the universality with which French is spoken, even among classes who, in the British possessions, know nothing of English. All that the British Rulers of India can do is to see that, as far as in them lies, a true and not a false Anglicization should



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

prevail. To the late Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, belongs the credit of having, by the educational reforms initiated by him, done his best to ensure this. He strove, not to set back the current of Western enlightenment, but to set in motion side by side with it another current, one that should run in the direction of a true Oriental culture, and an Oriental simplicity of life and manners.

As regards Lord William Bentinck's relations with the Native States of India, a policy of non-intervention in their internal affairs had been enjoined on him; the principle was doubtless a sound one, but its application was somewhat premature. The Indian princes had not been so far sufficiently stimulated by British example and exhortation to exert themselves to purify their administration, and when the slight checks hitherto exercised were removed, they naturally reverted to their old ways. As a matter of fact, intervention had to be resorted to in a more active form than probably would have been the case had their old checks not been withdrawn. The Nizam of Haiderabad was the first to ask the Governor-General to order the discontinuance of the check and control exercised by British officers; the Governor-General acceded to his request and withdrew his representatives, and the Nizam was left to carry out his sovereign pleasure in his own way, a way that eventually compelled a succeeding Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, after the Nizam's death, to take over the Berar districts from his successors, and apply their revenue to the discharge of the Nizam's financial obligations to the Government of India. Though willing enough to throw off English control, the Nizam paid the English the compliment of asking to be allowed to raise a personal bodyguard of fifty English soldiers. He was, however, induced to withdraw his request. The Province of Berar has since been leased in perpetuity to the Government of India by an arrangement concluded with the Nizam by Lord Curzon in 1902. Sir David Barr, an authority on Native States, has described this as a great achievement, for it cut a Gordian knot which had puzzled many administrations. In Mysore, intervention was rendered necessary by a popular revolt against the Hindu Ruler, to whom the State had been handed over after the



LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

151
SL

Conquest of Tipu Sultan in 1799: the Ruler had to be deposed and the country was placed under British administration for a period of fifty years down to the year 1881, when an adopted son of the deposed Maharaja was re-instated as Ruler. Since this time there has been no further necessity for interference. The administrative system has been brought up to the standard obtaining in British provinces, and that standard, as Sir David Barr has shown, has been on the whole worthily maintained ever since. Owing to the mad action of the Ruler of Coorg in plotting against the British Government, war was declared against him, and Lord William Bentinck himself personally directed the campaign. The Raja eventually surrendered, and was deposed, and sent to Benares as a State prisoner; Coorg, with the tacit acquiescence of the people themselves, became British territory.

A few difficulties occurred in connexion with the King of Delhi; the King had adopted the unusual course of sending a special emissary to England to press certain claims; he selected for this purpose the great Hindu reformer, Ram Mohan Roy. The Mission came to nothing, as the British Government refused to recognize it; this move on the part of the King of Delhi naturally annoyed the Governor-General, but he took no active steps in this particular matter. However, he had to interfere actively in the matter of taking steps to have the murderer of the Political Commissioner of Delhi, Mr. Fraser, brought to justice; and the man was tried and hanged like an ordinary criminal. This murder alone was proof of the disorganized state of affairs in the old Mogul capital, which eventually culminated in the events of the Great Mutiny of 1857, when the Mogul dynasty was finally ousted from even the semblance of power. Lord William Bentinck paid a personal visit to Oudh to try and persuade the King to govern better, and the warning he gave the King had at least a temporary effect; he went so far as to replace in office a former Dewan, one Mahdi Ali, on the representations of the Indian Government, but unfortunately this man did not continue to receive that support from the British that was necessary for him in order to carry out and make his reforms effective. The British Resident was compelled to refuse Mahdi Ali's



RULERS OF INDIA

SL

appeals for support, on the ground of non-intervention, and things went from bad to worse, until the maladministration of the King became so bad that Lord Dalhousie was compelled, some years later, to actively intervene, and the State ceased to exist as an independent unit. Active interference in the affairs of Jaipur was necessitated by the murder of a British officer as the results of plots and counter-plots between the Rani and the Thakurs, or Barons, of Jaipur. Sir Charles Metcalfe had used his influence to effect a reconciliation ; and what the historian has described as one of the most pathetic incidents in the history of the English in India occurred on the occasion of his visit to the State. This was the sudden appearance of the Raja, a child of eight years old, and a representative of a family whose origin is lost in antiquity, from behind the purdah, and his throwing himself, with touching confidence in the justice and sympathy of English authority, into the arms of Sir Charles Metcalfe, and begging his protection for himself and respect for his mother. Eventually the affairs of Jaipur were adjusted by a Council of Regency, and the new Raja, a mere child, was placed under the protection of a British Resident permanently placed at the capital.

The foreign policy of Bentinck was conducted mainly with the view of checking the Russian advance on India. He drew up a masterly minute on the whole subject of the position of the English in India ; in it he reviewed what he considered to be dangers from within and dangers from without. Chief among the latter he placed the traditional Russian designs on India. The principal objects of his policy are described as having been to convert the Indus into the Ditch of British India ; to associate the Sikhs and the Rulers of the Sindh Valley with the British in its defence, and to create a friendly Afghanistan as a Buffer State between India and any possible invader from the North-West. With this policy in view, Bentinck always maintained friendly relations with the Sikh Maharaja, Ranjit Singh. A special Mission under Alexander Burnes was sent to Lahore in 1831. Burnes carried with him on this occasion an autograph letter from the King of England, William IV. He also took with him a present of English horses, with which present the Maharaja, who



LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

GL
153

was a good horseman, as most Sikh gentlemen are, and a keen lover of horse-flesh, was especially pleased. The Governor-General himself had a personal interview with the Maharaja, at Rupar on the Sutlej, in the following year. A commercial Treaty followed from this meeting. Bentinck gave his indirect support to the exiled monarch of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk; and he gave him and his family a pension. He also entered into negotiations with the Amirs of Sindh; and negotiated a Treaty with them for the promotion of trade beyond the Indus. Bentinck paid great attention to this matter of trade, especially in connexion with the trade routes to India and China. Especially he encouraged the enterprise of the early pioneer in the movement for swifter steam communication between England and India, Lieutenant Waghorn, and helped him substantially in his exertions to divert the current of trade from the old ocean highway round the Cape of Good Hope to the more expeditious route down the Red Sea.

During the debate that took place in the House of Lords on the subject of the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833, the Marquess of Lansdowne paid an eloquent tribute to the good service that Lord William Bentinck had rendered to India. Indeed, it has been recorded that it was very largely due to the recognition by the Government of the excellence of Bentinck's administration that the Company received such favourable terms under the new Charter. Bentinck's term of office came to a close in March, 1835, when he finally left India. He was offered a Peerage on his return to England, but declined the offer. He resumed his Parliamentary career, but it was not destined to be a long one. He passed away in the year 1839 at the age of sixty-five.

The inscription on Lord William Bentinck's statue in Calcutta, composed by his friend and coadjutor, Lord Macaulay, may well conclude this sketch of an eminent Ruler :

To
WILLIAM CAVENDISH BENTINCK

who, during seven years, ruled India with eminent prudence, integrity, and benevolence : who, placed at the head of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

a great Empire, never laid aside the simplicity and moderation of a private citizen : who infused into Oriental Despotism the spirit of British Freedom : who never forgot that the end of Government is the happiness of the governed : who abolished cruel rites : who effaced humiliating distinctions : who gave liberty to the expression of public opinion : whose constant study it was to elevate the intellectual and moral character of the Nation committed to his charge :

This monument was erected by men who, differing in race, in manners, in language, and in religion, cherish with equal veneration and gratitude, the memory of his wise, reforming, and paternal administration.



CSL

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR

EARL OF AUCKLAND, 1784-1849

GEORGE EDEN, Earl of Auckland, was the second son of the first Lord Auckland, who had been created a peer by William Pitt. His family were not unconnected with India, his mother being a sister of a former Governor-General, Lord Minto. He himself never married, and when he afterwards proceeded to India he was accompanied by one of his sisters, the Honourable Emily Eden, who contributed some interesting portraits of the princes and people of India to literature in the shape of letters to her sister, written from the Upper Provinces of India. Being a younger son he was originally intended for a professional career. After leaving school he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1802, and after taking his degree, was called to the Bar in 1809. His elder brother was drowned the following year, and, as was not uncommon in the days when pocket boroughs were the fashion, he succeeded to his brother's seat and entered the House of Commons for a Parliamentary career. In 1814, by the death of his father, he became Lord Auckland. He was constantly present in his seat in the House of Lords, and in 1830 obtained a seat in the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint. In 1834 he became First Lord of the Admiralty. He was regarded as an able and popular member of the Cabinet.

On the resignation, early in 1835, of Lord William Bentinck, Lord Auckland was selected to be his successor as Governor-General of India by the Court of Directors, on the recommendation of Lord Melbourne; but he was unable to assume office till the spring of 1836, when he took over charge from Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had been acting as Governor-General pending his arrival in India.

The Directors were in the habit of entertaining their

high officers of State before they left England for the East. at the banquet given in Lord Auckland's honour he made an utterance which revealed the spirit in which he was about to take up his responsibilities; it was a speech worthy of one who was succeeding to the beneficent work of his great predecessor: 'I exult at the opportunity thus afforded me of doing good to my fellow creatures, of promoting education and knowledge, of improving the administration of justice in India, of extending the blessings of good Government and happiness to millions of her people.' The times were times of peace, and the historian has said: 'Cold-mannered, reticent, shy, good-natured, robust of figure, disliking all pomp and parade, and delighting in regular official work, Lord Auckland was eminently fitted by temperament and long experience to discharge the most exacting duties of quiet times.'

It has often been the fate of the great Administrators of India to encounter the harsh criticism, if not indeed the actual hostility, of their own countrymen in their beneficent task of ruling, when they have the interests of the ruled solely at heart. Lord Auckland showed at the very outset of his Indian career that he was not a man to be deterred by such considerations from what he considered to be his duty. His first act was to remove a judicial anomaly which existed, and which Lord Macaulay, whom he had the good fortune to have as his adviser in the realm of law, had pointed out to him. Of the two Judicial Courts of Calcutta, the Sadr Adalat, or High Court of the Company and the Supreme Court of the Crown, the former had jurisdiction throughout the whole Presidency; the latter had jurisdiction in Calcutta only. Europeans had the privilege of an appeal to the Supreme Court; Indians could appeal only to the Sadr Adalat. This worked somewhat harshly, as any European, having a suit against a Native, could compel him to attend in Calcutta, a distance perhaps of 1,000 miles from his home. The Act passed to remove this anomaly, Act XI of 1836, was exceedingly unpopular with the European community of Calcutta, and was stigmatized by them as 'The Black Act' of Macaulay. Lord Auckland's personal characteristics were eminently calculated to wear down this feeling of resent-



ment, a feeling which has not been unknown within the present generation, when another Ruler of India brought forward a Bill which he thought might simplify judicial procedure in the country districts. Lord Auckland has been thus pictured by his biographer : ' His understanding was excellent, his temper placid, his taste and tact exquisite; notwithstanding his apparent gravity, he was cheerful and under his cold exterior there was a heart overflowing with human kindness, and with the deepest feelings of affection, charity and benevolence.' The same writer has remarked that the one flaw in an otherwise fine character was indecision; but his attitude in this particular case does not seem quite to point to such a trait, but rather to determination; at any rate a determination to do what was right.

Lord Auckland was able to do much to stimulate the new enterprise inaugurated by his predecessor in the department of education, and in order to spur on the ambitions of native scholars and to encourage them to go in for real culture, instead of contenting themselves with a mere smattering of Western knowledge, he founded a number of scholarships. Neither did he neglect the vernaculars, but gave every encouragement to vernacular teaching amongst the masses of people, though not much was achieved in this direction till another twenty years had passed by. Especially did he give an impetus to one most beneficial reform that had been inaugurated by his predecessor, that of a study of medical science. It was during his régime that the actual practice of surgery by Indians was set on foot. Among the native medical men there had been many fairly good physicians, but hitherto no skilful surgeons. Caste had been a great obstacle to the proper study of anatomy, without which study skill in the difficult art of surgery could not be attained. By 1837, four of the most promising students of the reformed Medical College in Calcutta might be seen using their scalpels in dissecting dead bodies. Moreover, they were the pioneers of a movement that gradually spread over the whole country and has been of such widespread importance in reducing the sum total of human suffering by the application of skilled medical science to the ailments



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

of so large a population as that of India. In these days of enlightenment it seems curious to read that many persons shook their heads over an experiment that seemed to war against Native prejudices. All honour is due to these early pioneers in so important a branch of knowledge, and so it is to all pioneers who inaugurate a new departure. Even in these days similar obstacles to those overcome by these early pioneers in medical science have to be overcome by enterprising Indians who have wished to leave the old beaten tracks, which would have kept them in the particular trades and professions of their hereditary castes. This has been specially seen in the department of agriculture; men doing excellent work in this great and important department, have often told the writer of their early struggles and the difficulties they had to overcome, arising from the caste prejudices of their own family and of the whole tribe they belong to. These difficulties not uncommonly took the form of temporary ostracism.

In other directions also, Lord Auckland showed that he had the interests of the people at heart. He had been fated on one of his tours up country, to see the effects of a famine, and he realized the necessity of irrigation, which only want of funds prevented his inaugurating: at the same time he has the credit of having been the first to establish relief works, which marked a new era in the history of Indian famines. Similarly, finding a tax called 'The Pilgrim Tax' in force, which seemed to him to be a tax on the exercise of their religion by the people, being practically a tax levied on all persons on pilgrimage, which brought in the fairly large sum of £30,000 a year, he abolished it. It does not appear, however, that it had pressed very heavily on the people generally, but it was as well that the Government should not be identified by the people as making a profit out of their religious necessities: the people have quite enough to do as it is, to satisfy the exactions of those, who, under the guise of religion, do undoubtedly make large profits out of the pious tendencies of their countrymen. An organization exists which works on a larger scale even than the great touring agency known as Cook's: all the most celebrated shrines have their agents all over the country, and personally



conducted tours are a great feature of the organization of pilgrimage. The affairs of the Protected States occupied a good deal of Lord Auckland's time and thought. In the middle of 1837 he was called on to undertake a rather difficult task in connexion with the affairs of Oudh, always a thorn in the side of the British Government, as long as it remained a semi-independent State. The King of Oudh, Nasir-ud-din, died rather suddenly one night—rumour had it, by the effect of poison administered by the Badshahi Begum, his adoptive mother, whose displeasure he had incurred by disowning her reputed son. By Muhammadan law an uncle of the deceased King's was the next heir, and the British Resident, Colonel John Low, one of those distinguished military civilians who have done so much to enhance the prestige of their country when placed in difficult situations, hastened to the palace to install the uncle. When he arrived, however, he found the old lady, not by any means the first lady in Indian history who has proved to be a masterful personality, in command of the situation. She held as hostages certain Englishmen who were in the palace at the time: she had imprisoned the rightful heir, and had enthroned her own favourite. The colonel promptly brought up troops and forced in the gates of the palace with cannon, and in his turn, became master of the situation, and sent off the Begum and her nominee as State prisoners to a fortress in British territory. Lord Auckland made a Treaty with the new King, but the Court of Directors appear afterwards to have disallowed it.

Similarly, the affairs of another State, also a semi-independent one, Sattara, required his attention. Under the influence of Mountstuart Elphinstone, a young Raja had been installed in Sattara at the close of the Second Mahratta War. He had been placed under Captain Grant Duff, the famous historian of Mahratta annals. He had promised well, as the writer has shown in his sketch of Mountstuart Elphinstone. However, as is not uncommonly the case with the young princes of India, the promise of his youth had not been fulfilled. There are many causes why this should be: the chief cause is the malign influence of men whose sole object is to get the power into their own hands. Elphinstone had particularly warned the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

young Ruler against such men—the Vakils and low intriguing agents' he had styled them. There were plenty of such men about the young Ruler to poison his mind: and the form the particular poison took at that time is the form it still takes, that of insinuating that he was a mere puppet in British hands. These men had their own axe to grind in making these insinuations, as such men indeed always have. Thus it came about that the young prince began to chafe under a Treaty which he said denied him all political powers and reduced him to the position of a mere manager and farmer of a district. He also came to regard himself as the rightful heir to all the old claims and glories of Mahratta^o greatness, and as the destined restorer of Mahratta Empire over Hindustan. He intrigued with the Portuguese Government at Goa, with the exiled Raja of Berar, Appa Sahib, and even tried to tamper with the loyalty of the Company's Native officers and Sepoys. The Government had proofs of all these intrigues in their possession, but not wishing to be hard upon him, the then Governor of Bombay, Sir James Carnac, was sent to Sattara to see him and to get him to accept a few easy conditions on which he might have retained his sovereignty. He rejected them and was formally deposed, and sent off to Benares as a State prisoner in 1839. Incidentally the whole affair is one more proof, if proof were needed, of the wisdom of Lord Dalhousie's subsequent policy of annexation. Many of these minor States were really only centres of such intrigues and would always have remained so as long as they were ruled by princes of this type. The people of India accept the inevitable. Lord Dalhousie knew this, and he realized that there was less probability of intrigue against the Supreme Power, were such States absorbed into the British dominions once and for all, than where a merely nominal sovereign who had not the capacity of ruling well, was maintained on his throne by British bayonets. Lord Auckland paid a visit to Gwalior in 1840 and rewarded the young Maharaja Jankoji's consistent loyalty by the restoration to his dominions of certain districts in Khandesh. The Maharaja had recently shown his goodwill by his willing co-operation with the British in their operations



against the Thags and Dakaits. Lord Auckland had to use strong language with the Ruler of Indore, Hari Rao, who seems to have profited from the warning conveyed, for Lord Auckland was able to write to him in terms of congratulation on 'the happy results that had followed from his previous warning'. A curious discovery was made at Karnal, where the Nawab had been found plotting against the British Government. The inner apartments of the ladies of the family, known as the Zanana, were found to be receptacles of the grim engines of war, which had taken the place of the feminine articles of attire that were supposed to adorn those apartments. The Nawab's dominions were confiscated, and his family pensioned off, and he himself was sent a prisoner to Trichinopoly. Matters in Haiderabad were allowed more or less to drift, as other more pressing matters connected with external policy soon confronted the Government.

The great event of Lord Auckland's period of rule was the war with Afghanistan. That there were dangers to be guarded against beyond the frontiers of India at this period of British history in India, was recognized not only by the man on the spot, Lord Auckland, but by the Government at home. Sir Alfred Lyall has shown what these dangers were: 'Beyond the Punjab on the further side of the Afghan mountains there were movements that were reviving in India the ever-sensitive apprehension of insecurity. The march of Russia across Asia, suspended by the Napoleonic wars, had latterly been resumed: her pressure was felt throughout all the central regions from the Caspian Sea to the Oxus, and by the Treaty of Turcomantchai in 1828, she had established a preponderant influence over Persia.' A few years later the Shah of Persia, who claimed Western Afghanistan as belonging by right to his crown, was preparing for an attack on Herat, the chief frontier city of the Afghans on that side, and the key to all the routes leading from Persia to India. Some of the leading Afghan Sardars were in correspondence with the Persian King, and Shah Shuja, the hereditary prince who represented the legitimate line of descent from Ahmad Shah Abdali, founder of the Afghan Kingdom, but who had been driven out by the new Afghan Dynasty, founded by

the sons of a powerful minister, was an exile in the Punjab, whence he was making unsuccessful attempts to recover his throne, soliciting the aid both of the Sikhs and the English. That there was every justification therefore for action on the part of the Rulers of India, is undeniable, but whether the action ultimately decided on by Lord Auckland was wise or politic is open to question.

Lord Auckland did not act precipitately ; he determined to send in the first instance a Commercial Mission which might or might not develop into a political one as events turned out. He had an excellent excuse ready to hand. On his first assumption of the Governor-Generalship of India, the Ruler of Afghanistan, who was the Amir Dost Mahomed, had sent him letters of congratulation, and he had begged Lord Auckland 'to communicate to him whatever may suggest itself to your wisdom for the settlement of affairs of this country, that it may serve as a rule for my guidance'. Lord Auckland in his reply, had expressed his desire to see Afghanistan 'a flourishing and united nation', and he declared his intention of sending some gentlemen to discuss commercial matters with the Amir. This he now proceeded to do, and he placed at the head of the Mission a young officer of the Bombay Army, Alexander Burnes, one of those soldier-politicals who, like the soldier-civilians, have done so much to enhance the renown of England in the East and to win fame for themselves. He had already visited Kabul some four years before this. The Mission was dispatched toward the end of 1836, and was received at Kabul with great pomp and splendour by the Amir's son, Muhammad Akbar Khan, who has made a name for himself in history. The young envoy was graciously received by the Amir, with whose appearance and character he seems to have been much struck. He recognized in him the one strong man whose masterful sway over an unruly people, gave sure pledge of his power to guard the main outworks of the Indian Empire towards the west. And Dost Mahomed at this time, indeed, appeared willing to grant almost any concession that the English demanded. He had, indeed, shown himself at first very careful of British susceptibility in his foreign policy, and when a Russian envoy reached



EARL OF AUCKLAND

163

his court while Burnes was still there, he received him but coldly : this was in strict accordance with a promise he had made to Burnes privately and voluntarily. Burnes was quite won over by his friendly attitude, and wrote to his Government urging that he should be supported and strengthened as the best means of carrying out their policy of having a strong and friendly and united nation on the Indian Frontier as a bulwark against Russia. But this friendly attitude only lasted so long as he thought that the British Government would help him to obtain the restoration of Peshawar, which had at one time been an Afghan Province. As the historian has said, 'He still clung to the belief that the British Government would look favourably upon his case, and he was willing to receive a little from England rather than much from any other State, but that little included Peshawar as an irreducible minimum.'

Meanwhile, the Shah of Persia, attended by some Russian officers, had led an army in person against Herat. Thereupon, the Dost, seeing it hopeless any more to negotiate with the English on his own terms, commenced negotiations with the Russian agent in his capital. Lord Auckland had already spoken the last word about Peshawar, 'The question of Peshawar' he had written, 'must be left in the hands of Ranjit Singh, our firm and ancient ally, with whom the Amir would find it to his advantage to make peace. The goodwill and protection of the Indian Government would be assured to the Afghan Ruler so long as he placed his foreign policy under British guidance.' A Treaty dating from 1809 already existed with Ranjit Singh. Lord Auckland had detected signs of restlessness in the old Sikh Ruler, who was still hankering after greater territorial power, and he had written—'I have entreated Ranjit Singh to be quiet, and in regard to his two last requests, I have refused to give him 50,000 muskets, but I am ready to send him a doctor and a dentist.' He now proceeded to negotiate a fresh Treaty between the British Government and the Sikh Maharaja, confirming him in the possession of Peshawar, and making it a condition that he should assist the British in their operations against Dost Mahomed and in favour of Shah Shuja. Lord



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Auckland had now no other alternative but a recourse to arms. Dost Mahomed had openly thrown himself into the arms of Russia. Alexander Burnes, writing to a friend from Kabul, had said, 'I came to look after commerce, to superintend surveys and examine passes of mountains: and likewise certainly to see into affairs and judge of what was to be done hereafter, but the hereafter has already arrived.' This referred to the hostile attitude now openly assumed by the Amir. When the news reached England, the Ministers declared that, 'the welfare of our Eastern possessions requires that we shall have on our Western Frontier an ally interested in resisting aggression, in the place of chiefs ranging themselves in subservience to a hostile power.' This fully justified Lord Auckland in the new policy he proceeded to inaugurate, and having written to the Directors, 'a crisis has now arrived in Afghanistan, which imperiously demands the interference of the British Government,' he proceeded to issue his manifesto, in which he openly charged Dost Mahomed with giving his undisguised support to the Persian designs in Afghanistan, and to forming schemes of aggrandizement and ambition, injurious to the security and peace of the Frontiers of India. And he stated that 'the Government of India had therefore determined to espouse the cause of Shah Shuja, and only when Shah Shuja shall be secured in power, and the independence and integrity of Afghanistan established, will the British Army be withdrawn'.

Had Lord Auckland realized the entanglement that was to be the outcome of this forward policy, he might perhaps have availed himself of the loophole that presented itself at the last moment for escape from the position. The Persians had commenced an actual attack on Herat late in 1837. A young British officer, Eldred Pottinger, happened to be in Herat at the time: he had been on a roving commission and was travelling about in disguise. On the approach of the Persians, he had revealed his identity to the reigning prince of Herat and to his Vizier, and had offered his services as an artillery officer skilled in the use of ordnance in the defence of the place against the Persian attack. He proved the backbone of the defence, and, notwithstanding that the Persians had Russian officers



with them, they never succeeded in getting into the place, and after nearly a year's siege they had returned baffled. What had influenced them in their action, had been a demonstration made by a British force in the Persian Gulf, sent there by Lord Auckland, in response to a request made to him by the English Minister at the court of Teheran, who had been visiting the Persian camp before Herat, and had written strongly to Lord Auckland on the necessity of thwarting Russian machinations against India. Pottinger's reward for his gallantry was his subsequent appointment by Lord Auckland, as political agent at Herat, under the orders of the British Minister at the court of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk. It has been recorded that one influence in deciding the King of Persia to retire from Herat, was a conversation he held with a British envoy sent to his camp. He had asked the question, 'Is it a fact that if I don't leave Herat there will be war?' The reply of the envoy had been, 'All depends on your Majesty's answer.' The King had then said that he would comply with the demands of the British Government. With the Shah of Persia's acquiescence, therefore, in the British demands, and the consequent failure of Russia's suspected designs against the Western Frontiers of India, all pretext seemed to have been removed for sending a British Army to Afghanistan, but though Lord Auckland had heard the news within a month after issuing his first manifesto, and before his armies were actually on the march, he would not draw back from the position he had taken up when he might gracefully have done so. A second manifesto was issued by his Government declaring that, 'although the British Government regarded the retreat of the Persians from Herat as a just cause for congratulation, it was still intended to prosecute with vigour the measures which had been announced, with a view to the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in Afghanistan, and of a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression upon our North-West Frontier.' Warlike preparations went on steadily, and by the end of November, 1838, an Army 14,000 strong, with some 10,000 of Shah Shuja's levies, was assembled at Firozpur.

The Governor-General had proceeded in person to



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Breazpur to inspect the Army of the Indus as it was styled before it commenced its march. The Sikh Maharaja also proceeded in person to meet him at the same place. The old Maharaja was passionately fond of horses, and the Hon. Emily Eden, Lord Auckland's sister, who wrote her observations on men and things in India, in her journal, just as Lady Amherst had done, tells the story of how he ran out in the sun one day to feel the legs of some horses recently presented to him by the Governor-General, with as much keenness as if he had been a boy trying a new toy. She also relates the extreme pleasure with which the old Sikh Ruler accepted a portrait she gave him of the young Queen of England, who had only commenced her memorable reign the previous year. He promised to hang it up before his tent with all the honours of a royal salute. Two independent States lay between British India, and the objective of the expedition. These were the Punjab and Sindh. It had been resolved to send the main Army, under the command of Sir Willoughby Cotton, which was to escort Shah Shuja to Kabul, through Sindh into Southern Afghanistan by way of the Bolan Pass. What this meant the historian has shown: 'It had a march before it of more than a thousand miles of parched plains and rugged mountains, peopled by either lawless tribes or communities ill-affected to our rule.' There were not wanting experienced men in England who doubted the wisdom of the enterprise now definitely entered upon by Lord Auckland. The Duke of Wellington had remarked that 'the consequence of crossing the Indus once to settle a Government in Afghanistan will be a perennial march into that country', and Mountstuart Elphinstone also had written that, 'an Army of proper strength might take Kandahar and Kabul, and set up Shah Shuja, but for maintaining him in a poor, cold, strong, and remote country, among a turbulent people like the Afghans, I own it seems to me to be hopeless.' In India also many voices were raised in warning against an attempt to set up a prince who had been cast out more than once by his own subjects, in the place of a Ruler who had held his own ground so masterfully against all assailants for so many years as Dost Mahomed had. The Army commenced its march in December, 1838.



EARL OF AUCKLAND

167
SL

Macnaghten and Burnes accompanied the force in the capacity of political officers. Both were destined never to see India again. They fell victims to Afghan treachery. The principal difficulties that had to be encountered were connected with the question of transport and supplies especially, as the Army marched across Sindh. These eventually were only settled by a Treaty made with the head of the Sindh Septs, Mir Rustam. The expedition reached its final objective, Kabul, without very much actual opposition. Kandahar surrendered, Ghazni was taken by storm; Dost Mahomed fled, and the exiled monarch, Shah Shuja, was triumphantly conducted into the great palace fortress of Kabul, the Bala Hissar, in August, 1839, after what has been described as a military promenade. Honours and rewards fell in showers. Lord Auckland was created an Earl, Macnaghten and Burnes were knighted.

The real difficulties were now only to begin, and they were caused by Lord Auckland's determination to remain in the country till Shah Shuja had been firmly seated on his throne. This was naturally regarded by the people of Afghanistan as foreshadowing the establishment of a Protectorate over the country. And when to the eyes of the British Government all was quiet and their object seemed to have been fully attained, preparations were already on foot, by a people who were determined to have no foreign domination, to oust the British with ignominy. It was to be a lesson not easily to be forgotten, of the dangers of a too forward policy. Lord Auckland would have been wise had he withdrawn when withdrawal would have been easy and honourable after the attainment of his immediate object. Sir Alfred Lyall's comment on the situation may well be quoted here: 'The story of our first campaign in Afghanistan is well known; Shah Shuja was easily replaced on the throne, and the English remained in military occupation of the country round Kabul and Kandahar for about two years. But the whole plan had been ill-conceived politically, and from a strategic point of view the expedition had been rash and dangerous, for the base for this invasion of Afghanistan lay in Sindh, a foreign State under Rulers not well affected toward the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

English, while on our flank, commanding all the communications with India, lay the Punjab, another foreign State, with a numerous Army watching our proceedings with a vigilant jealousy. Such a position was in every way so untenable ; the advance movement was so obviously premature, that no one need wonder at the lamentable failure which ended our first attempt to extend the British Protectorate beyond the limits of India.' The reception accorded to their monarch by the population of Kabul was in itself significant. It has been recorded that no Afghan of known repute came forward to pay his reverence ; indeed one observer remarked, ' His entry into his capital was more like a funeral procession than the entry of a King into the capital of his restored dominions.' There was still one more significant sign, always an ominous sign in the East ; when Macnaghten, who had been lavish in the distribution of large sums of money in subsidizing the Ruler of Herat and others, found his treasury running low, he tried to effect a loan through the bankers of Kandahar, but failed ; with their usual keen foresight they realized the instability of the power of Shah Shuja, even though he was backed up by the bayonets of the British. They, like all financiers in the East, had their fingers on the pulse of public opinion and had gauged it correctly. Just so in the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, Lawrence failed to get a loan from the bankers of Peshawar till Delhi had fallen ; till they were assured indeed that British authority was no longer the mere shadow of a name, but again a realized fact. A significant remark besides had been made by a brother of the Dost's to Macnaghten in the course of certain negotiations between the Dost and Shah Shuja. He asked Macnaghten—' Why the English were helping Shah Shuja with arms and money, if he were indeed the rightful King of the country ? ' and he significantly added, ' Leave him now with us Afghans and let him rule us if he can.' But the signs were either not noted, or their significance was under-estimated and the decision to stay at Kabul remained unaltered. Whatever may be thought of the decision arrived at to remain in Afghanistan, there can be no two opinions about the unwisdom of the reduction in the numbers of the Army



EARL OF AUCKLAND

69
SL

of occupation that was now ordered. It would certainly have been the wiser plan to have left the British force in full strength and have waited on events. As it was, the decision proved a fatal one and history has recorded the disastrous results that followed.

The decision to remain in Afghanistan had been largely due to the influence of Macnaghten, who appears to have dreamed of holding Afghanistan as an outpost for the Empire. There had not been wanting men of experience amongst the British officers who had foreseen that difficulties were bound to arise out of the decision. Sir John Keane, to whom the task of withdrawing a portion of the force had been entrusted, is reported to have remarked to an officer who had been ordered to join his force: 'I cannot but congratulate you on quitting the country, for, mark my word, it will not be long before some signal catastrophe takes place.' Everything, indeed, invited disaster; apart from the weakness of the strategic position chosen as the base of the Army of occupation, the position eventually chosen for its encampment at Kabul was the worst that could possibly have been adopted. The troops had been originally cantoned in the strong palace fortress of the Bala Hissar, which commanded the city, and the engineer officers had emphatically declared that it was the only possible position. The British envoy, however, had deferred to the wishes of the Afghan Monarch. Shah Shuja had at first given his consent to the troops remaining there, but had afterwards complained that their presence was a slur upon his dignity, and further that he required the quarters occupied by the troops for his harem. The cantonment selected was overlooked and commanded, moreover, by low hills and forts and, as if this were not enough, the chief stores were located in a small fort some way from the cantonment. The defence of the Bala Hissar was taken over by the Shah's own troops. Various movements premonitory of trouble began to take place all over the country; the adherents of the Dost began to look up, and the citizens of Kabul began to whisper among themselves, 'Please God the Dost's Army will soon rid the land of the Feringhis and destroy them to a man with their Kafir King.' The danger from the Dost temporarily



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

passed with his defeat in the open field, and within a short space after, he voluntarily surrendered to Macnaghten. Macnaghten was at the time taking an evening ride. The incident has been thus described : 'An Afghan horseman rode up to him and told him that Dost Mahomed was close at hand. In a moment the Amir came up, threw himself from his horse, caught hold of the envoy's stirrup, and then of his hand which he placed upon his lips and forehead in token of entire submission. Macnaghten invited him into the Residency. After bowing to the ground and touching the floor with his forehead, the Amir rose and presented his sword to the envoy, who returned it to its owner with some words of kindly encouragement.' George Lawrence was with Macnaghten in the capacity of secretary, and he has recorded the personal appearance of the Amir : 'The Amir was a robust powerful man, with a sharp aquiline nose, highly arched eyebrows, and a grey beard and moustache, which evidently had not been trimmed for a long time.' No better man could have been chosen than Captain John Nicholson as his escort to Calcutta. He was received everywhere en route with the greatest honour, and granted the handsome pension of £20,000 a year. His successor, the Shah, was now becoming as much despised by the British officers, as the Dost had been admired, and even Macnaghten, in writing to commend the Dost to the honourable care of Lord Auckland, had said : 'The Shah had no claim upon us ; we had no hand in depriving him of his kingdom ; whereas we ejected the Dost who never offended us, in support of our policy of which he is the victim.'

With the surrender of the man who seemed to be the only rival to be feared, another opportunity had now been given to Lord Auckland to withdraw with peace and honour, but the calm that followed deceived the British authorities into imagining that all was well, and that like other Oriental peoples, the Afghans had decided to accept the inevitable. But they were not as other Orientals, as all their proverbs go to show, and it was to be only the calm before the storm. So peaceful, indeed, did things appear that when General Willoughby Cotton handed over the charge of his duties to General Elphin-



stone, who, notwithstanding his expostulation that 'he was too old and infirm for such a duty', had been placed in command of the Army of occupation, he had remarked, 'You will have nothing to do here.' Macnaghten, also writing to Lord Auckland, had described the general tranquillity to be 'perfectly marvellous'. But the British had become identified in the minds of the people with their new Ruler, who was making himself extremely unpopular with all classes of his subjects. Moreover, he was strongly suspected by shrewd observers of actually intriguing with his fellow tribesmen to get rid of the English. Warnings were conveyed to Macnaghten, but he refused to credit such treachery on the part of a man who owed everything to the British Government. Doubts of the wisdom of Lord Auckland's policy had begun to trouble the minds of the Court of Directors, and they were beginning to be alarmed at the prolonged stay of the British troops in the country. They had clearly seen that there were only two possible alternatives now open to Lord Auckland, either withdrawal, or a considerable increase in the military force in the country. They had stated their preferences to be in favour of the abandonment of the country, and a frank confession of complete failure rather than the continuance of the occupation and the bolstering up of a weak Ruler like Shah Shuja. Lord Auckland placed the matter before his Council early in March, 1841, and with the support of two of its members, decided on remaining. He was doubtless largely influenced by the opinion of Macnaghten who had scouted the very idea of withdrawal, which he said would be 'an unparalleled political atrocity and a cheat of the first magnitude'. Thus Lord Auckland rejected the first alternative suggested by the Directors, and, unfortunately, for financial reasons, was unable to adopt the second, that of sending reinforcements to strengthen the military position in Afghanistan. Thus the way was prepared for one of the greatest military catastrophes that have ever threatened the very existence of British power and prestige in the East.

However, the Afghans had not yet found the time ripe for action, and Lord Auckland's policy appeared to be justified for some time longer; indeed matters remained



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

so outwardly calm that even English ladies travelled through Afghanistan in safety and proceeded to join their husbands at Kabul, as if it was an agreeable Indian military cantonment : among these was Lady Macnaghten, the wife of the envoy. Macnaghten had again been able to write, 'All is content and tranquillity, and wherever we Europeans go, we are received with respect, attention, and welcome.' John Nicholson had formed a truer estimate of Afghan character, and he did not stand alone ; the British general, Nott, who had been standing fast at Kandahar, had grimly remarked, 'the throat of every European in this country is being bared to the sword and the knife of the revengeful Afghan and the bloody Biluch.' There were not wanting many friendly hints from some of the better Afghan chiefs : one of these had remarked to a British officer who had taken a perilous ride across the country, 'The Afghans are determined to murder or drive out every Feringhi in the country.' Macnaghten, however, refused to abandon his attitude of calm confidence, which was indeed a splendid testimony to his courage, whatever may be said of his judgement. And, similarly, Alexander Burnes, who had taken up his quarters in the city, refused to listen to the warnings conveyed to him by his faithful Indian Munshi, Mohan Lal, of plots that were being secretly matured all round him. Then, as so often happens in the East, the bolt fell suddenly from an apparently clear sky.

One morning in November, 1841, Sir Alexander Burnes had been congratulating Sir William Macnaghten on his recent appointment as Governor of Bombay. That very morning several Afghan Sardars had met and concerted measures for a general rising against 'the accursed Feringhi', and they had agreed that Burnes was to be the first victim. Again a friendly Afghan warned Burnes of what was going on, and even the Shah's chief Minister urged him to fly while there was still time, but with that splendid courage that animated him, as it did Macnaghten, he refused to leave his post, contenting himself with asking the British general for armed assistance, but without showing any particular urgency for it. And even when the mob had commenced attacking his house, he would



not let his Sepoy guard fire on them, but went out on to the balcony and quietly harangued them. The attack being pressed home, Alexander Burnes and his brother disguised themselves as natives, and went down into the garden of the house. A treacherous Kashmiri had promised to conduct them to a place of safety, but as soon as they reached the garden, he called out, 'Sikander Sahib is here,' and the two brave men were at once cut to pieces. When he was urged by George Lawrence to take prompt action to crush the outbreak, the old general is reported to have said, 'My force is inadequate, and you don't appear to know what street fighting means.' The general, moreover, had taken the opinion of Macnaghten, who had remarked that he 'did not think much of the outbreak, which would soon subside', to back him up in his unwillingness to take any decisive action. Even the Shah is said to have expressed his surprise at the inertness and apparent paralysis of will of the British general at this supreme crisis; for supreme crisis it very soon proved to be; and what was in its origin a mere street outbreak soon developed into a formidable insurrection. It was, indeed, only one illustration out of many that have occurred in the history of British rule in India, that prompt action, even in the case of apparently hopeless odds, is more likely to win the day than irresolution and an unwillingness to face possible consequences, which are naturally always interpreted to mean weakness, and as such always taken advantage of, whether the matters be of a military character or purely political. The old general, the historian has recorded, 'though as brave a gentleman as ever fought under his country's colours, was now too enfeebled in mind and body to trust to his own judgement'; and so the valuable time was frittered away in endless discussions and abortive proposals. It seems almost a pity, in the light of subsequent events, that no one was found daring enough to relieve him of his command at this juncture and assume supreme command himself, as John Nicholson, it is recorded by Sir John Kaye, had been quite prepared to do in the case of the supreme command at Delhi, had the general altered his plans for the assault of the fortress at the last moment, as he was credited with the intention



RULERS OF INDIA

SL

of doing. In the actual hour of danger Macnaghten, who had been a soldier before he had taken up civilian duties, 'displayed,' says the historian, 'a soldier's energy and forecast in the hour of danger'; and it is possible that in him might have been found the man for the supreme command at this crisis, but he did not venture to assume supreme command, out of regard doubtless for the susceptibilities of the veteran general. He kept pressing vigorous action on the general, and it had been his energy alone that had enabled supplies to be obtained for the troops after the Afghans had captured their commissariat store godown, where over £40,000 worth of stores had been kept at a distance of at least a quarter of a mile from the cantonments. It is recorded that Shah Shuja had been watching the British movements in the plain below from the heights of the Bala Hissar through a telescope, and that when he saw these stores captured, he exclaimed, 'Surely the English are mad.'

The inevitable end now rapidly approached; and Sir William Macnaghten himself was to be the next victim to misplaced confidence. The fervid and impetuous Mahomed Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Mahomed, had now practically assumed control of Afghan affairs. The Shah had been swept aside by him, and he proceeded to make overtures to the British. Nothing resulted from the first conference held late in November, 1841. The Afghan chief's demand was 'surrender at discretion'. The envoy's reply was, 'We prefer death to dishonour, and it will remain for a Higher Power to decide between us.' Macnaghten now again pressed vigorous action on the general, but to no effect. He was only asked to make the best terms he could with the enemy. As the difficulties of the British increased, so did the demands of the Afghans; and at the next conference they presented a draft Treaty in which the British were asked to sacrifice every item in the policy proclaimed in Lord Auckland's Simla manifesto of October, 1838. Dost Mahomed was to be sent back to Afghanistan, and Shah Shuja was to be allowed to return to India with the British troops, or to remain in Kabul. While Macnaghten was reading the draft, Akbar broke in with the impatient query, 'Why should



‘You not march to-morrow?’ Macnaghten agreed to march in three days, if the chiefs would furnish supplies. Hostages were then exchanged, and George Lawrence has recorded that ‘the conference broke up with mutual assurances of friendship and good faith’. The Army was unable to march, however, on the date agreed on, and the delay proved fatal. Macnaghten agreed to hold one more conference with Akbar Khan; at the same time he had once more pressed the general to act boldly for once and order a general attack. He had said to him, ‘I am sure we shall beat them, but as for these negotiations I have no faith in them.’ Macnaghten had had due warning of an intended plot against his life from George Lawrence before he proceeded to what was to prove his last conference; but he had only replied, ‘The life I have led for the last six weeks you know well, and rather than be disgraced and live it over again, I could wish a hundred deaths.’ And so he went forth to meet his death with the same calm courage and equanimity he had shown throughout the grave crisis. The scene has been thus described: ‘Receiving him in an apparently friendly manner, Akbar invited him to dismount and the party seated themselves on a mound. ‘Suddenly,’ says George Lawrence, who was an eye-witness, ‘my pistols were snatched from my waist, my sword drawn from my scabbard, and my arms pinioned by Mahomed Shah Khan, who raised me up from the ground saying, ‘If you value your life come along with me.’ At that moment I saw Macnaghten struggling to rise, his wrists locked in the grasp of Mahomed Akbar, who then shot him through the body with one of the pistols Macnaghten had given him only a few hours before.’

The Afghans now practically had the Army at their mercy. The one strong man who had counselled bold measures was dead, and there was no one among the military chiefs with the British Army, who was prepared to cry now, and to act up to the cry of ‘No surrender’. The humiliating terms of the enemy were accepted: the guns and all spare arms and ammunition handed over, as well as treasure and hostages. The general was still pressed to occupy the citadel, and hold the fort till relief came. Shah Shuja had even offered the English ladies



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

an asylum there, but his only reply had been, 'Can you guarantee me supplies? if not, we retreat.' And the retreat commenced on the morning of January 6, 1842: the sick and wounded having been placed in the Bala Hissar, and with deep snow on the ground, the Army, described graphically by George Lawrence as 'a crouching, drooping, dispirited Army', 4,500 strong, filed out of the cantonment. The women and children followed in a train of doolies, and some 12,000 camp followers accompanied the force. What happened as the Army left the entrenchment was a foretaste of what they were to expect on the march. Even before the rear-guard had started, a mob of Afghans filled the entrenchments, destroying and burning all they could not carry off. Many of the troops and followers fell by the way killed by cold or hunger, or pierced by bullets from the far-reaching jezails of the Afghans. The whole story of the retreat, as that of most retreats must inevitably be, was a sad one. The force had left Kabul under a safe-conduct signed by the Afghan chiefs, but this proved so much waste paper, and from the third day out onwards treacherous attacks were made on it whenever it passed through a defile. After the first of these attacks, the women and children and wounded officers were transferred into the charge of Akbar Khan, who, whatever his other faults were, proved himself a chivalrous captor: all his prisoners were well treated till their final release eight months later. By the fifth day of the march the Army had been reduced to 250 fighting-men, and Akbar Khan offered a safe-conduct to Peshawar to the general and his men, if they would lay down their arms. The general nobly refused the offer: he could not leave the camp-followers to their fate. By the seventh day, the force was reduced to 200 men, and again a safe-conduct was offered and again refused. Akbar then detained Elphinstone and his brigadier as hostages with a view of getting Jalalabad evacuated. Of the small force which passed through the only defile that remained between them and their countrymen behind the walls of Jalalabad, all were cut down but one; and with the arrival of that one English survivor, Dr. Brydon, within the shelter of the fort, which still bravely flew 'the meteor



'flag of England', came the last scene in the long drawn-out drama of the annihilation of that Army, which, as the historian has well said, 'In the hands of a Nott or a Napier had been well equipped enough and strong enough to have swept its discomfited foes in haughty triumph before the colours of England.'

Like all British Rulers of India when confronted with a grave crisis, Lord Auckland rose to the occasion. He had naturally felt the blow, but his usual calm equanimity did not desert him. Almost as soon as the news reached him, he issued a General Order in which he spoke of the disaster as 'a partial reverse, and a new occasion of displaying the stability and vigour of the British Power, and the admirable spirit and valour of the British Indian Army'. He had added that he and his colleagues were resolved to act with prompt and steadfast vigour for the maintenance of the honour and interests of the British Government. He at once began to make his preparations for a fresh expedition into Afghanistan, and he arranged for General Pollock to be placed in command. But the operations which he had planned on a considerable scale were not destined to be carried out during his term of office. There were various obstacles in the way of an immediate advance. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicholls, was personally opposed to any attempt at reconquest. Besides, Lord Auckland had not too many troops at his disposal at the time: and there was the ever-pressing subject of finance to be considered. The Home Government, moreover, were not too eager for a fresh war of conquest. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, however, Lord Auckland would in all probability have found a way of surmounting them, had not his hands been tied by an announcement which now reached him that a successor was on his way out to supersede him. He contented himself, therefore, with setting the machinery in motion for what appeared to him the most pressing necessity of the moment, the relief of the garrison of Jalalabad, which was under the command of the gallant Sale. Other forts there were that were still holding out under their heroic defenders: Ghazni, with Colonel Palmer in command; Kheilat-i-Ghilzai under



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Captain Halkett-Craigie ; and Kandahar under General Nott. All these but Ghazni succeeded in holding out successfully to the end, and showed what might have been effected at Kabul, had only the fort been held by the British troops, instead of a bullet-swept entrenchment only, and had the command been in more efficient and capable hands. No slur attached to the gallant commander of Ghazni. The court that afterwards sat to try him, found unanimously that 'the circumstances under which he had surrendered were such as he could neither control, alter, nor alleviate'. The Afghans had made a determined assault on Khelat-i-Ghilzai, which had been repulsed only after a very severe hand-to-hand fight in which several hundreds of Afghans had been killed. At Kandahar, General Nott had especially distinguished himself by his gallant defence. Sir Herbert Edwardes has recorded of Nott that, 'Whenever the Afghan tribes gathered to attack him, he marched promptly out, thrashed them, and marched back again.' His rule of conduct always was, 'Be bold, be bold, but be not over-bold.' And his example had inspired all his men to display equal boldness and courage. There was one very critical moment during the siege when a ruse of the Afghans was almost successful. Nott, with his main force, had been driving the Afghans before him for three days, when he suddenly found no enemy in front of him : they had doubled back to try and capture Kandahar during his absence. It was only by the display of the greatest gallantry on the part of the remnant of the garrison that the entry of the Afghans was prevented. There was one ugly rush of swarms of Ghazis intoxicated with bhang : and they had set one of the gates on fire : grain bags were hurriedly heaped up behind the gate, and the attack was frustrated ; and the garrison succeeded in holding their own till Nott returned. Having perforce stayed his hand, Lord Auckland issued orders that the troops under General Pollock were to do no more for the present than help General Sale withdraw from Jalalabad ; 'Ulterior operations' he had said, 'were to be considered by and by.' He then awaited his successor, who duly arrived in India early in 1842, in the person of Lord Ellenborough.



EARL OF AUCKLAND

179
SL

Edward Law, Earl of Ellenborough, was born in 1790 and died at an advanced age in 1871. He had been President of the Board of Control three times, and his administration at the Board is said to have been energetic and to have been popular with the permanent officials. The Foreign Office had been his special ambition, and he had made a diligent study of foreign affairs. He was not sorry, therefore, when the offer came to him, toward the end of 1841, of the Governor-Generalship of India, where foreign affairs were at the time receiving special attention. He took over charge of his new office from Lord Auckland in February, 1842. By the middle of March Lord Auckland had left the shores of India for good. The new Governor-General was a man of different calibre from his predecessor. In their study of the character of Lord Auckland, some of his biographers have stated that the one flaw in an otherwise fine character was indecision. But this criticism does not appear to be altogether a sound one. Lord Auckland may not have possessed the prescience of Pitt in choosing his agents, though the care he had exercised in the choice of his private secretary shows the importance he always attached to this subject: and most of those he chose to carry out his plans fully justified his choice. But his judgement did undoubtedly fail him in one most important selection he made, that of the man on whom the whole situation in Afghanistan was ultimately to depend. Unfortunately, this man proved a broken reed. It was the incapacity of the lieutenant, not of the Ruler, that ruined Lord Auckland's plans, just as the plans of the great Frenchman, Dupleix, had been brought to naught by similar incapacity on the part of his lieutenants. Characteristics have a way of being hereditary, and certainly the man of Auckland's race who afterwards held office as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Ashley Eden, was the last man against whom the charge of indecision of character could be brought; and if this was true of the descendant, why should it not be true of the ancestor? Obstinacy might have been an element in his character, but not wavering. A recent writer in the *Spectator* in a criticism on the characteristics of a certain statesman has said: 'No doubt the policy of firmness, consistency, and



RULERS OF INDIA

SL

encourage may, like any other policy, be caricatured and exaggerated beyond what is right. It is clearly worse to persist in a really bad scheme, even in the East, than to admit that one is in the wrong.' Herein then may be found the one flaw in Lord Auckland's character rather than in indecision.

In the case of Lord Ellenborough the position was reversed: if in Lord Auckland's case the indecision had been with the lieutenant, and not with the commander, in Lord Ellenborough's it was the commander with whom this fault of character was to be found, not with the lieutenants. In Generals Nott and Pollock, Lord Ellenborough had ready to his hand men of the right stamp: there was no lack of decision or of energy with them: they knew what ought to be done to retrieve the honour of the flag, and they were prepared to see the business through. Their master, however, though he might have seen the urgent necessity for decisive action, could not bring himself up to the scratch: he could not give the final orders for such action. At first, indeed, it had appeared as if he were going to act vigorously: on his first assumption of office, he had declared his policy in these terms: 'I hold it my first duty to advance,' but then 'the native hue of resolution had become sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought': and vacillation and irresolution followed. At one time, indeed, it seemed as if the operations would be confined to the relief of Jalalabad, and as if the other garrisons and the prisoners in Akbar Khan's hands were to be left to their fate. General Pollock had already, under orders previously issued by Lord Auckland, advanced to Jalalabad, only to find that its gallant garrison had already achieved its own relief. An account of the heroic defence of this place has already been given in one of the sketches of this series, dealing with the career of Sir Henry Havelock: but one incident cannot be passed over here: it bears a close resemblance to one that had occurred nearly 100 years previously during the defence of Arcot under Clive; and illustrates the devotion which Indian troops can show towards those whom they have learnt to admire and to trust. At a time when supplies were running low, some forty sheep out of



EARL OF AUCKLAND

CSL
181

500 that had been captured, had been handed over to the 35th Regiment of Sepoys. These men at once made them over to their English comrades, declaring that Europeans required animal food more than they themselves did. While General Pollock was standing fast at Jalalabad daily expecting his orders to advance, he received a dispatch from Lord Ellenborough thus worded: 'The only safe course is that of withdrawing the Army under your command at the earliest practicable period, into positions within the Khaibar Pass, where it may possess easy and certain communications with India.'

In General Pollock, fortunately, the nation possessed a man of initiative and resolution. He would not act on the instructions thus indirectly conveyed until he had tried what a strongly-worded protest might effect: this he promptly sent; and at the same time he wrote that, 'he regarded an advance in combination with General Nott to vindicate British honour, as far less perilous than a retreat without the prisoners whom his conscience forbade him to leave behind.' General Nott at Kandahar had received in April a still more definite order instructing him to fall back upon Quetta, after relieving the garrison of Khelat-i-Ghilzai. He too had not acted precipitately, and though he had no intention of disobeying orders, circumstances had prevented him from carrying them out immediately. Moreover, the fact that both generals had been allowed some discretion as to the time when they were to carry out the instructions given them justified them in deciding to stand fast where they were, until wiser counsels prevailed. In July came fresh instructions to General Nott: he was to retire from Kandahar, but he could choose his own route, and if it pleased him, he could retire to India by way of Kabul and Peshawar. Thus Lord Ellenborough adroitly removed the responsibility of action off his own shoulders, on to those of men who were only too willing to accept it. There had been some excuse for his indecision and irresolution. Before he arrived in India, he had given out that his mission was to restore peace to Asia. Only the irony of events had been too much for him. Never was that irony better illustrated than in the events that made a man of war out of a pro-



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

fessed man of peace. The whole of his short period of office was practically a period of war. The war to which he was now committed was only the first of a series of wars, one of which was to lead to the annexation of the Province of Sindh. The combined operations of Generals Nott and Pollock resulted, as history has recorded, in a brilliant success.

Lord Ellenborough clearly loved display, and he could not let the opportunity pass which the brilliant conclusion of the short campaign in Afghanistan gave him, of formally welcoming the triumphant Army on its return to India. He had collected another great army at Ferozpur, largely with the object of overawing the Sikhs of the Punjab, who had been credited with the intention of attacking the Army returning from Afghanistan as it passed through their territories. Lord Ellenborough had invited a large and representative gathering of princes, nobles, great officers of State, and English ladies to be present on the occasion: and a great reception was accorded to the Army of Kabul. The total force reviewed consisted of 40,000 men with 100 guns. The war with China had just been brought to a successful conclusion about the same time. For the time being his mission of peace seemed accomplished, and he had a medal struck with the magniloquent inscription engraved on it, '*Pax restituta Asiae*'; 'Peace restored to Asia.' It had been decided that Dost Mahomed was to be restored to the throne of Afghanistan: and it is recorded that, as he was taking leave of Lord Ellenborough, he was asked what he thought of the English in India. His reply was noteworthy and significant: 'I have been struck,' he said, 'with the magnitude of your power, and your resources, with your ships, your arsenals, and your armies, but I cannot understand why the Rulers of so great an Empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country.' Once again since that time did the British Government adopt a policy of active intervention in Afghan affairs, and once again did the Afghan people show that, if they were to have a master, he should be one of their own choice, and not a man imposed upon them by foreign bayonets. The causes of the Afghan War of 1878 and the



EARL OF AUCKLAND

183
SL

Results were almost identical with those of the war of 1838, the only difference being, as Sir Alfred Lyall has said, that by 1878 the Punjab and Sindh had become British, and communications between India and Kabul were preserved intact. With the recent conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreement, it seems unlikely that Afghanistan will again have any reason to fear a forward movement into her territories from either side, on the part of her powerful European neighbours: and whether she remains 'a strong, friendly and united nation', will largely depend henceforth upon the attitude of her own people. The British Empire in India is now close up to the Afghan frontiers. Between the two frontiers lies only that Debatable Land which has recently been the scene of two of England's many little wars on the frontier. And, as the historian has pointed out, 'the management of these intractable and fanatic Highlanders is by far the most troublesome of the political and military difficulties that confront the Government along the whole external frontier of the Indian Empire.'

After his return to England, Lord Auckland had further opportunities of serving his country in public office, and again he won a great reputation. He died on the first day of the year 1849, leaving behind him, records the historian, 'a memory universally honoured and regretted, and cherished by the tender affection and inconsolable grief of his family and friends.'



CSL

CHAPTER VII

THE ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH DOMINIONS
INTO THE PUNJAB

VISCOUNT HARDINGE, 1785-1856

LORD HARDINGE was another of the many 'sons of the rectory' who have distinguished themselves in the service of their country. A notable ancestor of his had been one of Charles I's most loyal adherents: he raised a troop of horse and received the honour of knighthood for his services. The epitaph on his tomb describes him as having been 'a faithful servant to God, the King, the Church of England, and his Country in the worst times'. An elder brother of Lord Hardinge's was a distinguished naval officer. He had received post rank very early in his career owing to his gallant conduct during the naval wars with both the Dutch and the French. His greatest achievement had been his capture of a French man-of-war that had been in pursuit of some Indiamen, after a three days' hard fight. He died in the hour of victory. A public monument in St. Paul's was voted by Parliament in honour of the young naval captain of twenty-three: and the merchants of Bombay erected another in that city. At school, Hardinge early showed his adventurous spirit by climbing the buttresses of Durham Cathedral in search of birds' nests. An amusing story is told of his early boyhood. His aunts, with whom he was staying, thinking he was too short for his age, tried to increase his height by making him hang with his arms on a door. His school career was not a long one: at the age of fourteen he was gazetted ensign in a small corps known as The Queen's Rangers, which was in Canada, where he proceeded to join it. He remained in Canada till the Peace of Amiens in 1802. He very early displayed that courage which was to be so marked a feature of his character throughout his career. He was returning from mess one night in Montreal,



VISCOUNT HARDINGE

GL
185

when he saw three ruffians attacking and robbing a man who was lying on the ground. He at once drew his sword and rushed to the rescue : the three ruffians, after a short show of resistance, fled before his vigorous onset. The man whose life he thus saved, Mr. Edward Ellice, afterwards became a Cabinet Minister and Secretary for War, both distinctions which young Hardinge himself was also destined to attain to. In 1802, Hardinge was promoted lieutenant, and two years later became captain. He spent a year at the Military College which was then at High Wycombe.

When the Peninsular War broke out, Hardinge went out, holding a Staff appointment as Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master-General. He was with Sir John Moore during the famous retreat to Corunna, and was by that gallant general's side when he was mortally wounded. He has described the fortitude with which the general bore his sufferings : the resolution and composure of his features completely deceived Hardinge into thinking that he would recover, and when he expressed a hope to that effect, the heroic commander replied : 'No, Hardinge, I feel that that is impossible.' An anecdote in keeping with the character of the heroic Sir John Moore has been recorded. Thinking that the general's sword was in the way when he was arranging for his removal in a blanket to the Field Hospital, he was unbuckling it, when the general remarked, 'It is as well as it is : I had rather it should go out of the field with me.' Hardinge attracted the attention of Sir John Moore's successor in the command, General Beresford, by the active share he took in the embarkation of the force the next morning. Wellington had also had a good opportunity of testing his quality. He had seen how he bore himself in some of the earlier battles of the campaign. After the battle of Vimiera, where he had been severely wounded, the Quarter-Master-General had written, 'I grieve to tell you that our inestimable friend, Captain Hardinge, was wounded in the hottest point of attack : it is his custom to be foremost in every attack where an unaffected gallantry of spirit irresistibly carries him : here he was conspicuous where all were brave.' The same officer, it is recorded, on noting the fortitude with which Hardinge bore his sufferings,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

had added to his dispatch these words: 'highly as I thought of him before, it remained for me to see him in his present state to be aware of all the excellences of his nature.' Not long after Corunna, Wellington wrote to General Beresford more than once to this effect: 'Send me Hardinge, or some other Staff officer of intelligence to whom I can talk about the concerns of the Portuguese Army.' Hardinge was sent, and was appointed to the post of Deputy Quarter-Master-General of the Portuguese Army. He was now lieutenant-colonel. Hardinge's reputation as a Staff officer of no ordinary distinction was established at the battle of Albuera. The biographer of Viscount Hardinge in the *Dictionary of National Biography* has stated that Napier credits Hardinge with having changed the fortunes of the day at Albuera. The victory was finally achieved by a charge of the fusilier brigade under Sir Galbraith Lowry Cole, whom Hardinge on his own responsibility boldly ordered to advance. In a subsequent edition of his work, Napier altered the words 'boldly ordered' into 'having strongly urged', owing to a remonstrance made to him by General Cole's friends. It makes but little difference. Hardinge himself always maintained that only his urgent pressure brought the advance about at a very critical juncture in the battle. There is an inscription on an equestrian statue of Hardinge that stands on the great Maidan at Calcutta, which records the part he took in this great victory.

Hardinge was in Flanders on leave when the news reached him of the escape of Napoleon from Elba. He received a letter from Wellington at the same time, instructing him to get a passport from Prince Talleyrand and to join the head quarters of the Prussian Army under Blücher as British Military Commissioner. At the battle of Ligny, his left hand was shattered by a stone driven by a cannonball, while he was at Blücher's side, but he remained in his place till the end of the action, and only when the day was won did he proceed to his quarters—nothing more luxurious than a stable had been assigned to him—and have it amputated. He suffered a good deal owing to the operation having been rather unskilfully performed by the German surgeon. Wellington, therefore, sent him the English



VISCOUNT HARDINGE

187
SL

surgeon attached to the Life Guards, who performed a second operation. Hardinge was promoted to the rank of Assistant Quarter-Master-General on the British Staff in 1816, and remained with the Prussian Army till 1818, when the allied Armies finally left France. A great review of the Prussian Army was held in the presence of the Duke of Wellington at Sedan, a place destined to be for ever memorable for the surrender of Napoleon III and his whole Army to the King of Prussia in 1870. It was on this occasion that Wellington took from his side the sword of the great Napoleon and presented it as a sword of honour to Hardinge. At a later period of his career, during the critical battle of Ferozshah in the First Sikh War, Hardinge, who had been wearing this sword throughout the campaign, unbuckled it and handed it to his surgeon to take to a place of safety in the rear, lest it should fall into the hands of the Sikhs. Hardinge also received from the King of England a decoration entitled 'The Gold Medal of Distinction', which at that time was the only decoration granted for distinguished services in the field. And on the remodelling of the Order of the Bath, he was created a Knight-Commander. The King of Prussia also decorated him with 'The Order of Merit', and conferred on him the decoration of 'The Red Eagle'. The King of Portugal had at an earlier period created him a 'Knight of the Tower and the Sword', one of the distinguished orders of knight-hood which the King of Portugal conferred on many an illustrious British officer during this campaign, when so many officers distinguished themselves, inspired by the example of their great commander. It is recorded that Hardinge, speaking from his place in Parliament at a later date, referred to the eminent services of the Duke of Wellington, and told an interesting anecdote about a remark of Napoleon's in connexion therewith. One of Napoleon's officers, mentioning to him one day the common saying in the British Army that Wellington's Peninsular Army had never attacked a position which it did not keep, had remarked that there was one instance to the contrary. Napoleon at once replied, 'But at that battle the French Army was commanded by the Duke of Berwick, an Englishman, and the English Army by Lord Galway, a Frenchman.'



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Hardinge's Parliamentary career on which he now entered lasted for more than twenty years. During this period of his career he received the distinction of Investiture by the University of Oxford as Doctor of Civil Law. He was twice Secretary for Ireland, once in 1830, and again in 1834. The Duke of Wellington had proposed him for this office in 1828, when he was himself Prime Minister : and it is recorded that, when doubts were expressed as to whether he was a strong enough man for the post as things then were, with the famous orators and able lawyers that would be opposed to him, the Duke replied : ' Hardinge will do : he always understands what he undertakes, and he undertakes nothing but what he understands.' He also held the appointment of Secretary at War twice from 1828 to 1830, and again from 1841 to 1844. He earned the title of ' The Soldier's Friend ', because of the lasting benefit he was able to confer on the rank and file of the Army. At the same time he was a stern advocate for discipline, and strongly supported the maintenance of corporal punishment in the Army as necessary for its discipline. At a later period, indeed, during his official career in India as Governor-General, he went so far as to cancel an order under which it had been abolished in the Indian Army by one of his predecessors, Lord William Bentinck. He had been warned that it might be a hazardous undertaking, but the results justified his action : the crimes for which corporal punishment was to be inflicted practically ceased in the Native Army : and it had not again to be resorted to. Hardinge was fifty-nine years of age when, in 1844, the offer of the Governor-Generalship of India was made to him. He had two years before been offered the appointment of Commander-in-Chief, but declined it for private reasons. The present offer he felt it to be his duty to accept. At a later date, Sir Robert Peel, in moving a vote of thanks to Hardinge for his conduct of the First Sikh War, referred to his acceptance of office in these terms : ' He made a great sacrifice, from a sense of public duty. He held at the time a prominent place in the Councils of her Majesty : he was regarded by the Army as its friend, because he was the friend of justice to all ranks, and he was an object of general respect and esteem.' Few men could



show such a record of military or public service as Hardinge, and the appointment was, therefore, a most popular one.

The voyage to India was becoming more varied than it had been in earlier days, owing to the inauguration of the Overland Route. Hardinge and his party travelled across France partly by rail, and partly in their own carriages. Thence they went by sea to Alexandria. At this place Hardinge had an interview with Mehemet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt. A side-light on the character of this famous man is thrown by a remark which he is recorded to have made to Hardinge on the occasion: he told him that he had been unable to read or write up to the age of forty-seven, but that he had then taught himself Arabic. From Alexandria the party travelled leisurely by boat to Cairo. After a moonlight visit to the Pyramids, they drove across the desert to Suez in a four-in-hand. This route had been made practicable by the personal exertions of Lieutenant Waghorn, who had long been making experiments in the direction of establishing more rapid communication between England and India: and it had only been finally inaugurated in 1841, a short three years before Hardinge and his party travelled by it. The coachman who drove them across the desert was an Englishman, and Hardinge has recorded how he drove the whole way at a gallop with extraordinary skill and speed, the journey taking them only twelve hours to accomplish. The party performed the rest of the journey by sea, and they reached Calcutta towards the end of July, 1844, after a total journey of some forty-four days. Having been duly sworn in, the new Governor-General at once entered upon his duties at Government House.

The new Governor-General of India was a man distinguished not only for military ability, but also for business capacity. Whether as Secretary at War, or as Irish Secretary, he had won a great reputation for the latter: and though, when holding the office of Irish Secretary, he had been dubbed by his chief opponent, O'Connell, as 'a one-handed miscreant', in official circles he had been known as 'a plain, straight-forward and just man'. At the time of Hardinge's administration, the Governor-General was also Governor of Bengal: and this made the



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

work of the administration exceptionally heavy. It, in later days, it became an urgent necessity that the Province of Bengal should be split up into two separate administrations, as being too great a responsibility for one man, it was at this time becoming increasingly evident that the twofold task of the administration of a large Empire, and of the largest Province of India, was becoming too great for one man, if the administration of the Empire was not to suffer in efficiency, or the Governor-General himself to break down under the double strain. But the change was not effected till the time of Lord Dalhousie. Hardinge found his work so heavy that he had to make it a rule never to grant an interview except under some very pressing necessity, or on political grounds. He never neglected, however, the early morning ride, so essential in the East for the maintenance of health and vigour. And he had a great task before him. Sir W. W. Hunter has said : ' It was felt on all sides that a trial of strength between the British and the one remaining Hindu Power in India, the great Sikh nation, was near.' It had, indeed, been foreshadowed in the speech which the Chairman of the East India Company had made on the occasion of the banquet given in Hardinge's honour before he left England. He had used these words : ' By our latest intelligence we are induced to hope that peace will be preserved in India. I need not say that it is our anxious wish that it should be so. You, Sir, know how great are the evils of war, and we feel confident that while ever ready to maintain unimpaired the honour of the country, and the supremacy of our arms, your policy will be essentially pacific : it has always been the desire of the Court that the Government of the East India Company should be eminently just, moderate, and conciliatory, but the supremacy of our power must be maintained when necessary by the force of our arms.' Sir Henry Hardinge was not the man to neglect the signs of the times. Lord Morley has recently said of the present state of affairs in India : ' If a crisis comes, it will find us ready. We have a dark and ugly moment before us, but we shall get through it, but only with self-command.' Such has ever been the distinguishing characteristic of the Rulers of India. Hardinge fully realized



the gravity of the crisis threatening the supremacy of the English in India, but he was not to be moved out of his course of promoting the peaceful development of the Empire entrusted to his charge by undue or panic-stricken precipitancy. At the same time he saw that if the peace of the Empire could possibly be maintained, it could only be by careful preliminary preparations to meet any possible emergencies. He made these preparations, and quietly strengthened his frontiers by movements of troops northwards. He then turned to matters of internal concern and moment.

The affairs of the protected State of Oudh first required his attention, as they had done that of his immediate predecessor, and as they were destined also to demand the special attention of his successor : but he did not do more at this time than address a letter of friendly warning to the King. In connexion with education, Hardinge gave a stimulus to the study of the English language and literature by issuing a minute in which he held out a fair prospect of employment in the public service to those who took advantage of the opportunities given them for instruction. It has been recorded that Macaulay, writing in 1836, stated that he had found in one town alone, in Bengal, 1,400 boys learning English. From this it would not appear as if the youth of Bengal wanted any special stimulus : but the public service has ever had attractions for a race not over-addicted to manual labour and ever-proficient with their pens. That the order was fully appreciated is shown by the fact recorded, that a great meeting of Babus was held in Calcutta at which it was resolved that an address should be presented to the Governor-General acknowledging his liberal policy. Hardinge did more than merely write minutes on the subject : he, personally, attended the Hindu and Muhammadan Colleges to distribute prizes : he used to listen to recitations of Shakespeare, and would compliment the students on their skill and proficiency. On one occasion he even gave a short address himself on subjects then new to his audience, Steam and Electricity. His reduction of the salt tax was a matter of special interest to the poorer classes of the community. To Hardinge belongs the credit, if not of actually inaugurating a new



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

railway policy for India, at any rate of initiating discussion on this important subject. He had preliminary surveys made, and the subject of bridging the large rivers examined into. He also went thoroughly into the subject of acquisition of land for the purposes of the railway, and in many other respects prepared the way for the work of construction which was commenced by his successor. He drew up a masterly minute on the whole question, of which a contemporary writer thus wrote in the pages of *The Calcutta Review*: 'we are much mistaken if his Excellency has ever written a State Paper on which he can reflect with more satisfaction, or which will more worthily illustrate his sagacity, penetration, and practical wisdom as a statesman.'

The aboriginal tribe of the Kandhs who inhabit the southern tracts of the Province now known as the Central Provinces and Berar, and especially the hill tracts that border on Orissa and Ganjam, were found to be addicted to the practice of offering up human victims, with a view to propitiating the earth-god, and to securing his favour at seed-time and harvest. Hardinge had a special Agency established in this part of the country, and the custom was gradually suppressed through the tactful interposition of the officers of the Agency, who, in the words of a recent famous police report, 'steered with remarkable skill for the middle line between fussy and over-zealous intervention on the one hand, and timid or negligent inactivity on the other.' Even at the present day a case of human sacrifice in these wild tracts occasionally comes to light. This particular tribe of Kandhs is not the least difficult of the many aboriginal tribes that the Government of India is called upon to deal with in its task of ruling the many and diverse races which go to make up the population of that vast continent. The care and solicitude which the Government of India has ever exercised in its regard for the susceptibilities, religious, social, or racial, of its subject peoples, may be illustrated in the case of this particular tribe. In the disciplinary sections of the Government Education Manual, special provisions are enjoined for the disciplinary treatment of such members of this sensitive, and at the same time high-spirited and proud race, as may



attend the Government Schools. Almost the last administrative act of Sir Henry Hardinge's before the state of affairs on the frontier urgently demanded his presence there, was the publication of an ordinance abolishing Sunday labour in all Government undertakings. This measure is recorded to have proved a boon to all creeds, and to have been thoroughly appreciated by all classes of the community.

The state of things that had brought about a crisis in the affairs of the Punjab has been thus pictured by a writer : 'Intrigue, debauchery, and riot reigned supreme at the court of Lahore. Rajas and ministers alike were massacred in quick succession, while the Army of the Khalsa, like the Praetorians of Imperial Rome, sold the supreme power to the highest bidder.' Sir Alfred Lyall has thus described the order of events that led up to the First Sikh War. 'After the death of Ranjit Singh, in 1839, no successor appeared who could manage the fierce soldiery with whom he had conquered the Punjab, and driven the Afghans from Peshawar. His reputed son, Sher Singh, who had succeeded to the throne, was very soon murdered. The chiefs and ministers who endeavoured to govern after Sher Singh's death, were removed one after the other by internecine strife, mutinous outbreaks, and assassination. The Sikh State was on the very verge of dissolution by anarchy, for all power had passed into committees of regimental officers appointed by an Army that was wild with religious ardour, and furiously suspicious of its own leaders. The Queen-Mother, Ranjit Singh's widow, and her infant son, Dhulip Singh, were recognized as nominal representatives of the reigning house, but they were liable at any moment to be consumed by the next irruption of sanguinary caprice, and their only hope of preservation lay in finding some outlet abroad for the forces which had reduced the Sikh State to violent internal anarchy. For this purpose it was manifestly their interest to launch their turbulent Army against the English into a collision that would certainly weaken and probably destroy the military leaders.' Firmly believing, like all devout Hindus, in the existence of the soul after death in another state, the court had done its best by propitiatory offerings of ghi on an immense scale



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

at their most sacred shrine, to keep the soul of the late master of the Punjab from flitting to another world, and to enlist it on their side still as a dominant factor in the Councils of the State. But all their offerings had availed nothing, and so the final decision was come to that the Sikh Army must be launched across the Sutlej. The military leaders, Sir Alfred Lyall thinks, were not altogether blind to the motives with which they were being encouraged to march upon the English frontiers. A proof of this would appear to be found in a remark some of them made to the Rani: 'What have the English done that their territory should be invaded?' The Rani had been prepared for such a question: she then adroitly appealed to their patriotism, and encouraged them by holding out hopes that the British Sepoys would join them to a man. And thus the die was cast.

The launching across the Sutlej of the Army of the Khalsa, as the new military organization of the Sikhs was styled, was naturally the signal for war. Hardinge was not caught napping. He had already reached Ambala on December 3, 1845, and on the 12th he received the news of the invasion of the Sikhs. His foresight in making extensive military preparations was now to be fully justified. His first act was to issue a Proclamation annexing the Cis-Sutlej States, and calling upon the chiefs of those States for their loyal co-operation. Sir Henry Hardinge might, had he so chosen, have obtained the authority of the Home Government to his assumption of the supreme military command at this grave crisis, as some of his predecessors had done, notably Lord Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley, on occasions of great crises. But he magnanimously refused to move in the matter. On the contrary, it has been recorded that he even offered his services to Sir Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, as his second in command. Some severe criticism was afterwards passed on this action by the Press as derogatory to the high office of Governor-General. The gallant Herbert Edwardes, however, is recorded to have written to the *Calcutta Review* in his defence, in these terms, 'We are among those who think that to lead on a wing of a British Army against the enemies of his country derogates from the dignity of no man.'



On December 18, 1845, was fought the opening battle of the campaign at Mudki. Major Broadfoot, who was Political Officer attached to the force, was the first to give news of the approach of the Sikhs. He rushed into the small tent where a few of the officers were sitting and exclaimed, 'The Sikhs are upon us.' The battle, which was described by the British commander as a stout conflict, ended in a complete victory for the British. It was the first experience the British had of the quality of the Sikhs, and the Sikhs had shown themselves an enemy not to be despised. The bravery of the Sikh gunners was especially marked : all round the fifteen guns that were captured lay the Sikh gunners, not one left alive. They had died at their guns. Sir Henry Hardinge had seen a regiment of Native infantry during this hotly-contested battle apparently firing in the air, and he had instituted comparisons between them and the Portuguese troops of whom he had had experience during the Peninsular War. He remarked to an officer that they both had their fighting days. However, this particular regiment whose unsteadiness had been thus unfavourably commented on at Mudki by the Governor-General, won his admiration for the steadiness and gallantry with which it afterwards fought at Sobraon. One little incident may be recorded here, as it is characteristic of the imperturbability of the old Indian servant. 'The old Government House Khansamah, who had been in the service of every Governor-General since the time of the Marquess Wellesley, was found by an officer while the battle was raging in front of the camp, calmly laying places as usual in the mess tent, as if he was preparing for a State Dinner at Government House. He went on with his work, quietly and placidly, disregarding the possibility of not half the chairs being occupied by their usual occupants that fateful night, as indeed actually proved to be the case.' Some foreign visitors were present at this battle as well as at succeeding battles, in the person of Prince Waldemar of Prussia and his aide de camp, and so fearlessly did they expose themselves to the hottest fire, especially during the critical battle that followed Mudki, the battle of Ferozshah, that the Governor-General had actually to order them to the rear, as he declined to be

responsible for their safety. They had charmed everybody. It is recorded, by their pleasant manners, and their gallant bearing.

The battle of Mudki was followed three days later by the battle of Firozshah. This was the most stubbornly contested fight of the whole campaign and lasted well into two days. Sir Hugh Gough had been so eager to begin the attack without waiting for the reinforcements that were every hour expected, that Sir Henry Hardinge had repeatedly to remonstrate with him: at last he calmly remarked, 'Then, Sir Hugh, I must exercise my civil powers as Governor-General and forbid the attack until reinforcements come up;' and it was well that he did so, as these reinforcements made all the difference. As it was, things were so critical at one time that the historian of the events of this period thus writes, 'The fate of India trembled in the balance during that eventful night.' It was the firmness and decision of Sir Henry Hardinge that alone saved the situation: many officers were so despondent during the eventful night of December 21, that they were found counselling retreat upon Firozpur. However, the morning put a different complexion on matters, and though the Sikhs showed the greatest gallantry, they could not resist British determination, and the day was eventually decided in favour of the British. Hardinge had shown his opinion of the critical state of things by that act already recorded, of unbuckling the sword of honour he was wearing and sending it to a place of security in the rear. Hardinge himself had been on horseback during this eventful fight from 4 a.m. of December 21, to the early hours of the 22nd. He took his rest by lying down successively with four of his regiments in order to encourage them, the men being completely worn out and dispirited. It was during this night that one of the Native regiments is recorded to have left the camp: coming to a better mind, however, the men had all returned to camp by the next morning. As the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General were passing down the line, 'the colours dropping and the men cheering,' it is recorded that the officer in command of this particular regiment stepped out of the ranks in front of his regiment, and said, 'Sir, these cheers of my men are not



North having : only a few of the regiment were with me during the night.' This temporary lapse from discipline was, it is hardly necessary to say, a very unusual occurrence, and the men fully atoned for it by their valour and gallantry at the final and decisive action of Sobraon. Sir Alfred Lyall has thus written of this great fight : ' Firozshah was the most bloody and obstinate contest ever fought by Anglo-Indian troops, and at the end of it the English Army was left in bare possession of its camping ground in a situation of imminent peril.'

Sir Henry Hardinge, it has been stated, had not asked for powers that would have enabled him to take supreme command of the military operations : but the news of the first two engagements had by now reached England, and the Government thought the crisis sufficiently acute to justify their giving Sir Henry Hardinge supreme control of the military operations in India. It was therefore proposed ' that a letter of service from her Majesty the Queen should issue, enabling him as Lieutenant-General on the Staff to command in person the troops in India. The Duke of Wellington undertook to explain things to Sir Hugh Gough to prevent his feeling hurt at his apparent supersession, and to point out to him that the measure was one of absolute necessity under the very peculiar circumstances of a great crisis in India. As a matter of fact, Sir Henry Hardinge, by the remark he had made to Sir Hugh Gough referred to above, on the eve of the battle of Firozshah, had already practically taken upon himself the whole of the military responsibility, without putting the indignity upon Sir Hugh Gough of actually superseding him. Before the dispatch of the Home Government, moreover, reached India, the decisive battle of Sobraon had been fought and won, and as the necessity for his supersession had passed, the contents of the dispatch were not communicated to Sir Hugh Gough. He, therefore, remained in ignorance that he had been superseded. This was only one more instance out of many of the magnanimity of Sir Henry Hardinge.

The chief importance of the next battle of the campaign, Aliwal, won by Sir Harry Smith, was that it prepared the way for the final overthrow of the Sikh Khalsa at Sobraon.

In the interval between these two battles there had arrived at the Governor-General's head quarters that remarkable man, Henry Lawrence. The biographer of Sir Henry Hardinge has thus recorded his impressions : ' I can see him now in his long Chogah, with his Van Dyck beard and his lanky figure : we little thought he was destined to play so important a part in the history of India. The Governor-General had also fixed his eye on John Lawrence, and on these two brothers the future destinies of the Punjab in a great measure rested.' Both men and officers were longing for another fight that should be a fight to the finish, and one writer has said that ' The Army had been sickening for a fight : a malignant fever or epidemic must have broken out if action had been delayed another week. The officers had alleviated the tedium of the wait by hunting and pig-sticking. This often brought them into close proximity to the enemy, but the Sikhs were gallant foes, and it is recorded that they never molested any of the British officers, however near they approached their lines, when out for sport. One officer especially attracted attention, and the biographer has thus written : ' It was one of the events of the day to watch General Gilbert, a noted pig-sticker, riding after the boars which took him pretty close to the enemy's range, and although this repeatedly happened, we never once heard of his being molested.' On one of these expeditions, Hardinge had a bad fall owing to his Arab horse falling with him, but he did not allow this to interfere with his arduous duties, which he carried on as usual. At Sobraon the enemy's force consisted of 30,000 men with seventy guns, well entrenched and with reserves in their rear. Hardinge commenced the battle, and though still suffering from his recent fall, he rode throughout with his usual courage, handicapped though he was through having only one hand. At one point in the line, there was at one moment a dangerous movement of indecision and wavering, but on the Governor-General shouting out ' Rally those men ', an officer rushed forward and seizing the colours from the hands of a junior officer, ran with them to the front, and was successful in rallying the men. Sobraon was a decisive battle : the Sikhs were practically annihilated ; the bridge they had



trusted to for their retreat suddenly gave way, and they were precipitated into the river, where they were shot down almost to a man. The historian's few words describe the scene vividly : ' Few escaped, none surrendered.' It was really a fight to a finish. The slaughter was unprecedented : there had been rumours that the Sikhs had barbarously mutilated several British prisoners who had fallen into their hands at Firozshah, and the blood of the British soldiers was up. But after all it served its purpose : it saved a protracted war to the north of the river, which would probably have been rendered necessary, and which would have caused a still greater loss of life : and, as the historian has said, ' Humanity demanded that the war should now be brought to a close.' There are times indeed, in the world's history when apparent mercilessness is the truest mercy, and this was one. The Sikh artillery, practically the whole of which was taken, is said to have been exceptionally good ; a great number of the pieces exceeded in calibre anything then known in European warfare. Altogether, during the campaign, some 250 pieces of artillery were captured. These were afterwards paraded through the country to impress the people, and to give them a tangible proof of the defeat of their Army.

The campaign was over, and the question that Sir Henry Hardinge now had to settle was the future administration of the country. Of the alternatives before Hardinge, he rejected one, annexation, at once, as at the time impracticable. The second had been proposed by the Darbar in the shape of military control under a British Resident, a modification of Wellesley's subsidiary system. This course was not palatable to the Governor-General : it would only mean, he considered, a return to the old policy, more or less abandoned by the British Government, of ' backing up unpopular Rulers with British bayonets '. Finally, he adopted the policy of establishing a Sikh Government but with much diminished strength both in territory and in military power. A Treaty, styled ' The Treaty of Lahore ', was drawn up with these provisions ; the strip of territory between the Beas and the Sutlej was to be surrendered to the British, one million and a half pounds was to be paid as an indemnity. Failing the ability of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

the Darbar to pay this amount, Kashmir and Hazara were to be ceded outright as an equivalent. The Sikh Army was to be largely reduced in numbers. The sovereignty of Gulab Singh over such territories as might be assigned to him was to be recognized by the Darbar. A separate Treaty was then made with Gulab Singh, making over to him the beautiful vale of Kashmir. A portrait of Gulab Singh has been given by Hardinge in these terms: 'The most remarkable man in the country is Gulab Singh; he was formerly a running footman in Ranjit Singh's service. Entrusted with the task of conquering the hill tribes, he displayed great military ability, and secured for himself a revenue exceeding £600,000 a year.'

In order to have this Treaty ratified, Sir Henry Hardinge visited Lahore. He was met by a deputation of Sikh Sardars, headed by Gulab Singh as nominal minister. They had brought with them the little Maharaja, whom Sir Henry Hardinge describes as 'a charming child of eight years, acting his part without any fear and with all the good breeding peculiar to the Eastern people.' After a preliminary signing of the Treaty in Henry Lawrence's tent on March 8, 1846, a great Darbar was held in the State tent for the purpose of formally ratifying the Treaty. At the special request of the Maharaja, a clause had been added to the Treaty that the Governor-General had consented to occupy the town and citadel of Lahore with British troops for a limited period only, to give the Darbar time to reorganize its Army. The scene in the tent is described as a striking one, the little Maharaja, loaded with Oriental jewellery, and with the Sikh aigrette in his turban, looked on with perfect calmness. The Governor-General's speech ended with these solemn words: 'my co-operation shall not be wanting, but if you neglect this opportunity, no aid on the part of the British Government can save the State.' After the Sikh chiefs had expressed their gratitude and their resolution to follow the advice of the Governor-General, there was a momentary pause. The Governor-General was seen to whisper to the Foreign Secretary. It appeared that by the terms of the Treaty, the Koh-i-nur, or Mountain of Light, the great jewel which Ranjit Singh had acquired, not altogether by very creditable means,



from its former owner, Shah Shuja, was to be delivered to the Queen of England, and he had suggested that it should be submitted for his inspection. His wish was communicated to the Sikh ministers. Then ensued another pause, and whispers. At last a small tin box wrapped up in a shabby cloth was brought in. It contained the famous diamond. It was at once passed round for inspection and was then entrusted for safe-keeping to John Lawrence. It is related in the *Life* of that famous officer, how great his consternation was when for a time he actually lost the priceless gem.

Sir Henry Hardinge was called upon to pay a second visit to Lahore towards the end of the year 1846, to revise the Treaty which had been concluded in March, and had practically become inoperative through the intrigues of one at least of the principal Sardars of the Sikh Darbar. A second Treaty was negotiated by Hardinge entirely on his own responsibility; under the terms of this Treaty the Government of Lahore was to be carried on in the name of the Maharaja during his minority: a British minister was to be placed at the head of the Government, and he was to be assisted by a Native Council of Regency, consisting of eight Sardars: this Council was to act under the control and guidance of the British minister, and a British garrison was to be placed in the Punjab for the period of eight years, during which the minority would be in force. The Punjab was fortunate in having as its first British minister, Henry Lawrence. But the arrangement, as it happened, was only destined to last two years. A second trial of strength with the British in 1849 led to the Sikhs ceasing to exist as an independent and fighting nationality. Of this event Sir Alfred Lyall has said, 'The Governor-General's Proclamation in 1849 annexing the Punjab to the British Crown, carried our territorial frontier across the Indus right up to the base of the Afghan hills, finally extinguished the long rivalry of the Native Indian Powers, and absorbed under our sovereignty the last kingdom that remained outside the pale of British Empire in India.' In the interval between the two Treaties, Sir Henry Hardinge had retired to Simla. Some of the members of his staff had paid a visit to Kashmir,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

and on the way had visited Gulab Singh in his hill fortress of Jammu. An amusing incident is recorded as having happened to them on the occasion of this visit. On the morning of their departure, the officers could not find their shooting jackets. They had been taken away by the court tailor; after some delay they were restored to them, but entirely covered with gold kincob, or brocade, and in this novel garb they mounted their hill ponies and rode off.

The acknowledgement of the Board of Directors had been conveyed to Sir Henry Hardinge by the Chairman in these flattering terms, 'Let me say that all you have hitherto done inspires us with perfect confidence that all that you will do will be well done.' Similarly, after the second Treaty, the Chairman wrote out to him, 'I have now only to congratulate you on all you have done and are doing. You will see by the newspapers that even the best guides of public opinion are now delighted with your arrangements and give you credit for biding your time and doing the right thing at the right moment.' Honours from the Government followed in the shape of a peerage and an annuity. Sir Henry Hardinge was created Viscount Hardinge of Lahore and King's Newton. The Company at the same time proposed conferring on him a pension of £5,000 chargeable on the Indian revenues, but Lady Hardinge, who was in England at the time, anticipating her husband's wishes on the subject, refused the offer. She thought that by doing so she was interpreting her husband's own wishes on the subject; and she was right. It was not the first time in British Indian history that a Governor-General had refused to derive any pecuniary benefit from what he had regarded as a stern military necessity. What gave Lord Hardinge, as he now was, special satisfaction was a letter from Sir Robert Peel, thus worded: 'There is universal approval and admiration of your policy from first to last; above all things your moderation after victory is most applauded; it is thought, and justly thought, that it adds a lustre to the skill and valour displayed in the military achievements.' At the same time, Peel offered him the post of Master-General of the Ordnance in case he wished to return to England. A new Government having come into office towards the middle of 1846,



Lord Hardinge felt sorely tempted to resign his appointment and go back to England, but on receipt of a flattering letter from the Head of the new Government he put his inclination on one side, especially as the Board of Control had addressed him in similar terms. The Head of the Government had written, 'I am sure that no other chief can so well consolidate the peace you have achieved as yourself. The Eastern Nations obey a vigorous rule, but would easily evade all obligations if they did not fear the consequences. I trust, therefore, we shall have the advantage of your continuance in the Government of India.' Lord Hardinge decided, therefore, to remain and complete his work.

Affairs both in Nipal and in Oudh were destined to call for action on Hardinge's part during the concluding years of his rule. In Nipal, there had been one of those not uncommon dynastic revolutions more or less typical of what went on in Native States which had not been brought under British influence, and which, if once the Sovereignty of England were removed, would be the rule, and not the exception, in all States where that influence has been acknowledged. The Government of Nipal has always been somewhat of an anomaly. There is a Maharaja who is the nominal Ruler of the State, but as a matter of fact the real Ruler is the Commander-in-Chief, as the head of the dominant Military Clan : he is generally styled the Prime Minister. The most prominent man at this time was the famous Jung Bahadur, or War Lord, as his name implies, who was at a later date a well-known figure in London. He was Commander-in-Chief of the Nipalese Army. The revolution commenced in the usual way with a massacre, and, as so often happens in the East, the Rani was the original cause. A minister attached to her entourage was shot during his prayers, and the Rani promptly had the chief suspected of the murder placed in irons. She was a masterful personality. She walked off with the Sword of State to the Audience Hall in the palace where the chiefs were assembled, taking a favourite general with her. She handed the Sword of State to the general, and ordered him to kill her prisoner. The Maharaja interfered, and rode off to the British Resident to ask the advice of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

The British minister, but British ministers have never interfered in the internal concerns of Nipal. The Rani then retired for a while. Jung Bahadur then came on the scene with his troops. The Rani again came down into the hall bearing the Sword of State as before, and called out, 'Who has killed my minister, name him quickly or with this sword I shall kill my prisoner.' The chiefs prevented her by placing themselves in her way. She was reascending the steps leading from the hall when shots were heard: one of the principal chiefs and the Rani's general were seen to fall. The Rani came down again and called out to Jung Bahadur, 'Kill and destroy my enemies.' Thereupon ensued a general massacre of the thirty-five chiefs present in the Audience Hall, and the revolution had commenced. Jung Bahadur was made minister. So far he had espoused the cause of the Rani; the chiefs killed had been her opponents; but now the Maharaja began to reproach him for the massacre. The Rani next began to demand the death of the Heir-Apparent that she might seize the throne for her own son. But Jung Bahadur had his own little plans: he now espoused the cause of the Heir-Apparent, and in true Oriental fashion he laid his turban at the feet of the Maharaja and begged for permission to kill the enemies of the Heir-Apparent. Forthwith ensued another massacre: this time the twenty-six chiefs, who had taken up the cause of the Rani, were slain. Jung Bahadur then ordered the Rani to leave Nipal with her sons, and the Maharaja was persuaded to accompany her to Benares. He then installed the Heir-Apparent as Maharaja in his father's place and he himself became the virtual Ruler of the State. Upon the story reaching the ears of the Governor-General, who had no power by Treaty to interfere, he simply wrote to the Resident expressing a hope that some arrangement might be made between the parties before his acknowledgement of the new sovereign was demanded. That acknowledgement was afterwards given. Jung Bahadur proved a faithful ally of the English, especially during the troublous times of the Great Mutiny, when he assisted Sir Colin Campbell to recover Lucknow from the rebels, with a force of 9,000 men and twenty-four guns. Though relations with Nipal have long been friendly,



the policy of seclusion has been consistently followed down to the present day.

In Oudh, no improvement in the administration had been seen since Lord Hardinge had had occasion, some three years before, to write a letter of advice to the King : and matters, indeed, had become so bad that it became necessary for him to visit the King in person. One or two incidents had occurred which well illustrated the unsettled state of affairs. The King and his minister had both had their lives threatened : and armed soldiers indeed with two or three followers, had actually penetrated into the palace : they were cut down just as they were about to kill the King. The next day his minister was attacked by four men in the open streets, and forcibly held down, no man venturing to interfere. The men threatened to kill the minister, if any attempt was made to rescue him, and only at last let him go on the appearance of two elephants carrying the ransom they had demanded of some 50,000 rupees. Just as they were making off they were seized by the troops of the British Resident, who had hurried to the spot ; they were afterwards put upon their trial. The Resident undertook to see that they got a fair trial, as it had been practically under a guarantee given by him that their lives would be spared, that they had refrained from assassinating the minister when he was in their power. The Governor-General was received by the King with all honour, and the usual entertainments were got up, one of which took the form dear to many Oriental potentates at the present day, of an exhibition of fighting quails. The concluding words of the Governor-General's warning, which had been very carefully worded, ran thus : ' In case of your delaying the execution of the policy of reforms recommended by the British Government, it has been determined by the Government of India to take the management of Oudh under their own authority.' The King received this document in a thoroughly characteristic manner. He styled it ' The Golden Advice of the Governor-General ', and ordered it to be transcribed in golden letters illuminated on parchment. That was about the extent to which he took the advice to heart. No improvement of any lasting kind, as history has recorded, was effected : and eventually, after Colonel



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Outram's grave report in 1854, it was left to Lord Dalhousie to carry into execution in 1856, the threat made by Lord Hardinge in 1847.

One of the most beneficent measures of Lord Hardinge's administration was the impetus given to the construction of irrigation canals. It had surely been the irony of fate that had made of Lord Ellenborough, who was the immediate predecessor in office of Lord Hardinge, a man of war instead of that man of peace he had professed to be, and therefore unable to attend to the internal development of the country. He had been pressed to continue the work of construction of the great Ganges Canal; but he had done nothing, as, apart from the financial difficulties his war policy had entailed, he had not been fully impressed with the practicability of the scheme, and had been rather inclined moreover to treat it as chimerical. Lord Hardinge, however, fully realized its importance and promoted its construction by every means within his power. Those who have been privileged to travel by the side of this great canal from Hurdwar, where its waters are first diverted from the mighty Ganges, to Rurki, where it begins to flow on a more level surface, and to see the magnificent engineering work that has been achieved, can appreciate the difficulties that had to be overcome. In a recent number of *Blackwood*, Colonel G. R. Scott Moncrieff, a name distinguished in the engineering world, has thus written: 'The mightiest work of all is the Solani Aqueduct, where the canal crosses a valley about three miles in width, and there, not only in the rainy season, but at all times, one may see the swift stream of the canal above and the Solani river below. All these great works were carried out between 1846 and 1854, at a time when there were no railways in the country, and when the devices of modern machinery and other adjuncts to engineering works were unattainable. The chief engineer was Sir Proby Cautley, an artillery officer. He and his lieutenants had to devise their great works entirely from local resources, and they certainly succeeded in producing a monumental work, which has aroused the admiration of all who have seen it. A young civil officer who has since risen to be the Lieutenant-Governor of a Province, said to me years ago, 'I would sooner have been the man



who engineered the Ganges Canal than the greatest Governor-General that ever ruled India : the work of the Civil Governor passes away, the work of the other benefits every generation that comes after him.' The amount expended by the State on irrigation works in India, which represents as it were its insurance premium against famine, has been no less than £32,000,000. But the Irrigation Commission that was formed under the Government of Lord Curzon, and of which Sir C. Scott Moncrieff was the president, recommended the further enormous sum to be spent on the same beneficent work, of £30,000,000. An impetus has thus been given to important irrigation works all over the country. The result will be an eternal monument to the beneficence of British rule.

There were other matters also that called for the attention and care of the Governor-General during these concluding years of his administration. He did all in his power to put down the crime of infanticide in the Native States. His first procedure was to endeavour to persuade the princes to declare these inhuman sacrifices illegal : he then instructed the British Residents to see that the edicts issued by the Rulers were carried out, under pain, in case of their refusal to do so, of his extreme displeasure. That there was need for action may be shown from a story which the Maharaja Dhulip Singh is recorded to have told Lord Hardinge's biographer ; that he had actually seen, when he was a child at Lahore, his sisters put into a sack and thrown into the river. Lord Hardinge also tried to improve the sanitation of Calcutta in order to make it a more habitable place for Europeans than it had long had the reputation of being. He had the transit duties between the Native States in Central India and on the Sutlej abolished. He also encouraged the cultivation of tea in Assam, an industry which has done more than anything else to develop that great region, now an integral part of the Province of Eastern Bengal. The preservation of ancient monuments was also a matter that engaged Lord Hardinge's attention. Thus repairs were undertaken of the exquisite and historic Taj Mahal at Agra, and the graceful tower in the neighbourhood of Delhi known as the Kutb-Minar. It has been left to a later Viceroy, Lord Curzon, to do still more for the



RULERS OF INDIA

SL

preservation of India's ancient monuments, and for the beautifying of their surroundings. Thus what was formerly a waste in the immediate neighbourhood of the Taj has been created into a beautiful park, not unworthy to take rank among the earlier creations of the Mogul Emperors. In the matter of Military Reform, Lord Hardinge was called on to reduce the Native Army by some 50,000 men. He also took measures to place the artillery in an efficient state. Certain boons in the direction of increased wound pensions, hutting money and free rations in hospital for wounded men, that he was able to secure for the ranks of the Indian Army, gave him as great a claim to be called 'The Sepoy's Friend' in India, as his reforms in England had given him to be styled 'The Soldier's Friend'.

The words which Lord Hardinge wrote to his wife on the eve of his retirement from office, reveal the spirit which animated him in all he undertook: 'I must shrink from no duty to a public which has rewarded me so largely, and must maintain to the last, the principle which I exact from my subordinates that public interests ought not to be neglected. Whilst war and bankruptcy threatened the State, I remained in India: now that peace is established and prosperity reviving, I return to my own country with the consciousness that I have done my duty.' Shortly before his departure from India, the European and Native inhabitants of Calcutta presented him with an address which was thus worded: 'The inhabitants of Calcutta declare their sense of the distinguished services rendered by your Lordship to the country, and they express their wish to have some personal memorial of one who has received the highest honours from the Sovereign, and the thanks of his countrymen while ruling this vast Empire.' The outcome of this wish was a statue of Lord Hardinge erected on the great Calcutta Maidan. Lord Hardinge remained long enough in Calcutta to welcome his distinguished successor, Lord Dalhousie. It is recorded that the latter's slim figure and handsome countenance were narrowly scanned by the crowd assembled round the steps of Government House to welcome the new Ruler: and they asked themselves, 'What manner of man is this?' It was not to be long before he had given an answer to these silent



VISCOUNT HARDINGE

200
SL

questionings. Lord Hardinge finally left India in January, 1848. He died in 1856, at the age of seventy-two.

The General Order which was signed by the Queen herself, and issued to the Army in October of the same year, may fittingly conclude this sketch of a great and good man :
' The Queen has a high and grateful sense of Lord Hardinge's valuable and unremitting services, and in his death deplores the loss of a true and devoted friend. No Sovereign ever possessed a more honest and faithful Counsellor, or a more loyal, fearless, and devoted servant.'



CHAPTER VIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIA BY THE EUROPEAN NATIONS

DUPLEIX AND THE FRENCH, 1741-1809

BEFORE coming to the great struggle between England and France, which, having originally been for commercial supremacy alone, developed into one for political ascendancy in Asia, under the initiative of that great French patriot, Dupleix, Director-General of French Possessions in India, it will be necessary to say something about early European enterprise in the East, and the rivalry between the maritime nations of Europe to secure the commerce of the East. The earliest visit of a European to India that history has recorded was that made by the great world-conqueror, Alexander the Great, who, in his ambition to find more worlds to conquer, arrived in India in the year 327 B.C. Though eager to carry his conquests up to the Ganges, he was unable to get further than the Punjab, which he wrested out of the hands of its Hindu Rulers. The importance of his visit lies in the fact that with it commences the external history of India. It marks that first contact of Europe with India which was destined to play such an important part in the after-history of that great country. Then came an interval of nearly 1,800 years, before any fresh intercourse took place between India and Europe. There is a tradition, but it does not appear to be more than a tradition, of King Alfred having sent a messenger to India in the year 883 A.D. to visit the shrine of a Christian Saint in Southern India. Some adventurous travellers also occasionally visited the country during this long interval, and brought back with them stories of powerful Indian kingdoms and of untold wealth. But for all practical purposes India was an unknown land, and there was no intercourse between that country and any European nation. It was the discovery by the great Portuguese explorer, Vasco di Gama, in the year 1498 A.D.



SL

of a route to India by the open sea round the South of Africa, that first prepared the way for such intercourse. The favourable reception accorded the intrepid Portuguese explorer by the Zamorin of Calicut on the west coast of India, laid the foundations of European commercial enterprise in Eastern waters. The letter which the Zamorin (or the Sea-King) addressed to the King of Portugal strikes the keynote of that early European enterprise. Trade and not conquest was to be the sole object of ambition in these early days, though it was not to be long before conquest followed trade, forced on each nation in turn by the irony of events. The letter runs as follows : ' Vasco di Gama, a nobleman of your household, has visited my kingdom, and has given me great pleasure : in my kingdom there is abundance of cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones : what I seek from thy country is gold, silver, coral, and scarlet.'

Hitherto the great trade-routes between India and the West had been either overland by way of Egypt and Syria, or by the Red Sea. Alexandria, Constantinople, Venice, and Genoa had all in turn been the great marts from which the wealth of Eastern commerce had been distributed over Europe. The new discovery was destined to divert this trade from the central States of Europe bordering on the Mediterranean to the ocean-going peoples of Western Europe. First among the European nations to occupy this new field was Portugal, and not unnaturally so. The nation had not only won the right by the enterprise of one of its own race, but had been granted it in that famous world-embracing edict of Pope Alexander Borgia, by which he divided the whole undiscovered non-Christian world between Spain and Portugal, with a special grant of India to Portugal. The Portuguese succeeded in practically monopolizing the rich trade of India with the West till late into the sixteenth century. The reasons for their failure to keep it in their hands any longer were twofold. Portugal had been absorbed into the dominions of Spain, and thus her initiative and enterprise were for the time destroyed. Her agents abroad, of the later period, lacked the political genius, or the personal character, that had distinguished some of the earlier Portuguese administrators.



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

Holland took the place that had been vacated by Portugal, for Spain made no effort to hold the gorgeous East in fee, content with sending her fleets to the West, to bring away in her rich galleons the stores of gold she had discovered in the Americas. At the same time she issued a magniloquent decree, claiming the whole right of trade with the East Indies as part of her sovereignty, and Indian Seas as her territorial waters. The decree was thus worded : ' The Indies, East and West, are our house, privately possessed by us for more than 100 years : and no one has a right to enter without our permission.' The Dutch, however, took advantage of the recent weakening of Spain's naval power and prestige that had been wrought by England, and demanded as a right freedom to trade in the East Indies, and they backed up their demand by movements of their rapidly-growing Navy. Spain conceded the point, though not without a struggle. Sir Alfred Lyall has observed : ' At this period the common right of all nations to trade freely and peacefully with Asia, though it was asserted by the Dutch as against the Spanish monopoly, was, in fact, no more recognized than a common international right to cultivate or colonize. Each country was striving to seize and appropriate the largest possible share of this profitable commerce, to the forcible exclusion of all interlopers : they were all contending for complete and masterful possession : they were conquering by water as they might be conquering by land, and fiercely attacking any intruder upon their trading ground as if he were an invader of their territory.' The Dutch at once aimed at establishing the strictest monopoly. This very soon brought them into collision with the English, who, with the commencement of the seventeenth century, make their first appearance in the new field of Eastern trade. The first East India Company had been granted a Charter on the very last day of the sixteenth century, December 31, 1600, by Queen Elizabeth. By the year 1612, the English had their first settlement at Surat on the West of India. By the middle of the seventeenth century the English Company were brought into especially close rivalry with the Dutch, as the commercial operations of the two Companies, English and Dutch, were carried on over much the same geographical area in Eastern waters. But



the Dutch practically retained the preponderance throughout the whole of the seventeenth century. The Dutch Company, known as the Universal East India Company, which had been founded two years after the English Company, had the advantage, from a political point of view, of being backed up by its own Government with all the resources of the State, while the English Company was practically dependent upon its own resources. In the end this was to prove a most valuable source of strength to the English Company rather than a source of weakness. As Sir Alfred Lyall has well said : ' Armed with a valuable monopoly and left to their own resources, the English Company relied not so much upon State aid as upon their own wealth and energy : they underwent some perilous vicissitudes and performed some remarkable exploits.'

The final outcome of the continual struggles between the English and the Dutch was that the Dutch were practically left in undisputed possession of the islands in the further East, while the English were left to develop their trading settlements on the Indian sea-board.

Meanwhile the French King, Louis XIV, inspired by the ambition of his great financial minister, Colbert, had given his consent to the formation of the French East India Company, and thus the French began to appear on the scene. Colbert had dreamed of a great Asiatic dominion, and he is recorded to have advised his royal master to seize Egypt as a stepping-stone to such an Empire. The way had been prepared by the occupation of Mauritius, and by an attempt to form a settlement on the important island of Madagascar. Pondicheri, on the east coast, and Chandranagar, above Calcutta, had been purchased as footholds on the Continent of India. The French Ambassador is reported to have expressed English opinion on the subject of their various continental rivals in the following terms : 'The English distrust us : they despise Spain : they hate Holland.' But as it turned out, the English had not much to fear for some time from the rivalry of either France or Holland. Spain had long receded into the background as a possible rival. For various reasons connected with the continental wars that were more or less continuous towards the end of the seven-



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

teenth century, France and Holland had become so weakened that the English had been able to carry on their work of developing their commercial settlements almost unimpeded. 'Thenceforward,' writes Sir Alfred Lyall, 'the English began to draw slowly but continuously to the foremost place in Asiatic conquest and commerce. From this period of great continental wars in Europe we may date the beginning of substantial prosperity for our East Indian trade: for it was then that the English made good their footing on the Indian coasts.' But the eighteenth century, as it went on, was to witness a more or less prolonged struggle between the French and the English, for both colonial and commercial supremacy: the scene of the struggle for colonial supremacy was to be North America, and was to end in the acquisition of Canada: the scene of the contest for commercial preponderance was to be India, and was to end, though neither of the combatants, perhaps, realized it at the time, in the acquisition by England of her great Indian Empire.

The period of rivalry in the field of commerce alone, which may be said to have lasted up to the middle of the eighteenth century, was marked by great commercial activity on the part of the French Government: a new French Company was formed under the direct administration of the French Government, and Governors of the French Settlements in India were appointed. This close connexion between the French Government and the Company was in marked contrast with the independence enjoyed by the English Company. So long as the latter acted within the terms of the Charters which were periodically revised, it was allowed more or less complete liberty of action. All this favoured initiative and enterprise on the part of the Company's agents in India, and helped in the creation of that administration which under its chiefs, the Governors-General and Viceroys, has excited the admiration of the world. The French Company, on the other hand, was fettered and hampered in every way by its Government: this naturally did much to destroy all independence of action, and to stifle individuality and originality. What success French agents did attain under this system was achieved in the teeth of their Government. This system of interference was to be one of the principal



factors in the eventual failure of the French, not only to attain commercial supremacy; it was also to prove a bar to their attainment of that political ascendancy which their politicians of an earlier day had dreamed of. It is abundantly clear that such a dream had fascinated the imagination of that great Frenchman, Colbert, when he first launched the French on what he vainly hoped would prove a career of expansion in the East.

With the appointment of Dupleix, as Director-General of the French possessions in India, a change came over the scene: the dream of Colbert revived in Dupleix, and he strove to divert French ambition into its earlier aspect; and to make his countrymen see that, if commercial supremacy was to be attained, it could only be through the attainment of a political supremacy at the expense of all possible rivals, and especially of the English. The rivalry between the French and the English soon reached its most acute stage under this great Frenchman. It has been recorded that one argument used by the illustrious financier, Colbert, to induce the French King to embark on a career of territorial aggrandizement in the East, had been 'the extreme feebleness of the Oriental', which he assured him 'was becoming a matter of common knowledge'. The large number of adventurous Europeans who were wandering over the East throughout the centuries that followed that real contact of Europe with Asia, which was the result of the discovery of Vasco di Gama, had doubtless been largely responsible for disseminating such a report among their countrymen when they returned home from their adventures. Dupleix has sometimes been credited with having first discovered the secrets for the conquest of India. Thus, the historian, Mill, has said that the two important discoveries for conquering India were, first, the weakness of the Native Armies against European discipline, and, secondly, the facility of imparting that discipline to Natives in the service of Europeans; and he adds: 'Both these discoveries were made by the French.' Similarly, a French historian has written: 'England has been much admired and often cited for having resolved the great problem of how to govern at a distance of 4,000 leagues, with some hundreds of civil functionaries, and some thousands of soldiers, her immense



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

possessions in India. If there is much that is wonderful, much that is bold and daring, much political genius in the idea, it must be admitted that the honour of having inaugurated it belongs to Dupleix, and that England, which in the present day reaps from it the profit and the glory, has had but to follow the path which the genius of France opened out to her. It was Dupleix who first made use of disciplined Sepoys : who was the first to quit the ports of the sea, and to march an Army into the heart of the continent : he was the first, above all, who discovered the illusion of Mogul greatness.' Sir Alfred Lyall does not accept the above judgement as sound in its entirety : and he has stated that the real discovery of the value of organized troops had to be made, not by Europeans who knew it already, but by the Natives of India who had never before made trial of such tactics, or met such bodies in the field. This is doubtless true, but it must not be forgotten that this knowledge, howsoever acquired, had only been used by the great potentates in India in striving for the mastery amongst themselves. Dupleix was the first to make use of it in a struggle with a rival European Power : and so far, therefore, the credit may be allowed to rest with him of having shown England the way. Be this as it may, Sir Alfred Lyall gives Dupleix full credit for having first started on the right road towards European conquest in India. 'He saw,' writes Sir Alfred Lyall, 'that so long as a European Company held their possessions or carried on trade at the pleasure of capricious and ephemeral Indian Governments, the position was in the highest degree precarious. The right method, he argued, was to assert independence, to strike in for mastery, and to strike down any European rival who crossed his path.'

The only European rivals that stood in the way of the realization of Dupleix's dream were the English, and their expulsion from India became, therefore, a cardinal point in his policy. There was not room, he saw, for two rival European nations in India. At one period, indeed, in the great struggle for political ascendancy that this rivalry now necessitated, and which began with the declaration of war between England and France in 1744, it almost seemed as if the realization of his dream were within his grasp, but the English proved too strong for



SL

it was, as Sir Alfred Lyall has finely said, 'far beyond his power to influence the ultimate destiny of either nation in India, and the only result of his plans was that, as Clive said, "we accomplished for ourselves against the French exactly everything that the French intended to accomplish for themselves against us."' Dupleix had one great advantage to start with on his first arrival in India; his predecessors in office had managed affairs so tactfully that they had gained the confidence of many of the Native Powers, and had, moreover, made a considerable acquisition of territory. Dupleix's own personality had done much to increase this feeling of confidence; his early successes over the English during the first campaign had done much to increase the prestige of the French; and he succeeded in gaining a political status for his Company among the Native Powers that added materially to his advantage. This first campaign had ended with the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the news of which only reached India in 1749. 'The chief outcome of this sharp wrestle between the two Companies at close quarters on a narrow strip of sea-coast was a notable augmentation of French prestige in India, and a great encouragement to Dupleix in his project of employing his troops as irresistible auxiliaries to any Native prince whose cause he might choose to adopt. He was already in close correspondence with one of the parties in the civil war that was just beginning to spread over the Karnatik: he took care to keep on foot his disciplined troops whose decisive value in the field had now been abundantly manifested: he had overawed the neighbouring chiefs, depressed the English credit, and seemed to have struck out with the boldness and perspicacity of political genius the straight way towards establishing a French dominion in the Indian Peninsula.' As the next step in his plans for the discomfiture of his English rivals, he began to use his newly acquired prestige as a lever for establishing the ascendancy of France in the Councils of the Native Powers. Thus he commenced that policy of interfering in the rivalries of contending princes by lending his disciplined troops to any Native Ruler who required his aid against a rival. The English were not slow to take a leaf out of his book, and to do the same. This policy had one outcome, that Dupleix,



with his political insight, had probably foreseen : it enabled the two contending parties to continue their military operations in the field against each other in India, at a time when the two nations they represented were actually at peace in Europe.

✓ The early advantages, however, that Dupleix had succeeded in winning for the French were not destined to remain with them for very long. The state of affairs had indeed been very critical at one time for the English : how critical may be judged from the fact that they had sent home urgent requisitions for succour, representing to the Directors, as the terms of their dispatch read, ' that the French had struck at the ruin of your settlements : possessed themselves of several large districts ; planted their colours on the very edge of your bounds ; and were endeavouring to surround your settlements in such manner as to prevent either provisions or merchandise being brought to us.' A greater than Dupleix, if not in political sagacity and insight, at any rate in military genius and skill, had now arisen on the side of the English in the person of the heaven-born general, Robert Clive. His star gradually rose in the ascendant, while the star of Dupleix gradually waned and finally set for ever. The military genius and skill of Clive soon changed the aspect of affairs altogether : success followed success for the British, and defeat followed defeat for the French ; until the French Government, impatient of ill-success, and fearing for their finances and their trade, decided to discredit the policy of Dupleix, and recalled their great representative to France. ✓ The French had not entered even yet into the spirit of his dream, and, for the time being, they were only concerned for that improvement of their trade which they thought might follow from his recall. Dupleix was therefore superseded, and his successor actually made a Treaty with the English, under the terms of which both Companies bound themselves not to renew attempts at territorial aggrandizement. This Treaty, it has been said, proved the turning-point in the fortunes of France in India ; and under it the French practically threw away the undoubted advantages they possessed at the time. It is recorded that the English Governor, in forwarding the provisional Treaty he had made with Dupleix's successor,



Codeheu, warned the Company that the French were in an advantageous position for continuing hostilities : they had, he wrote, a stronger military force, and their influence with the country Powers far exceeded that of the English. The concluding portion of this letter shows how great must have been the influence of the commanding personality of the illustrious Frenchman, when, even after his many military reverses, the English Governor could write of that influence in the terms he used. But even had Dupleix remained in India, it does not appear that the final issue could have been other than it was. Sir Alfred Lyall has noted that a great French historian, in defending the Controllor-General of France of that period from the imputation of having sacrificed an Empire in Asia by recalling Dupleix, shows that if the French Government had retained his services, and supported his policy, the ultimate event could not have been materially changed. 'The whole fabric of territorial predominance which Dupleix had been so industriously building up was loosely and hastily cemented : it depended upon the superiority of a few mercenary troops, the perilous friendship of Eastern princes, and the personal qualities of those in command on the spot.' It was thus exposed to all the winds of fortune and had no sure foundation.'

The French were to make yet another direct attempt, not for re-establishing any political ascendancy such as Dupleix had dreamed of, but to secure simply a commercial monopoly. And even to do this, they saw that it was absolutely necessary to carry out one part of Dupleix's programme at least, and to aim at effecting the total expulsion of the English from the eastern coast of India. This accomplished, political supremacy might or might not follow, as the case might be. For the present, they were to be content with the establishment of commercial supremacy. And such was the tenor of the instructions conveyed to the French commanders who were entrusted with the enterprise, when, on the breaking out of the Seven Years' War in Europe, the opportunity came of setting it on foot. Hitherto the hostilities that had been carried on between the rival Companies in India had been of a more or less informal and unauthorized character. Henceforth they were to assume a more direct and regular aspect,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

and the French Company was to be backed up by the whole might of the Government of France : such indeed had been the programme, but the incapacity of the French Government of the day prevented the programme from being carried out in its entirety, or with that thoroughness that could alone have commanded success. The officer this time entrusted with the enterprise was Lally, who was personally intrepid enough ; but English and French authorities alike have pronounced him to have been a man totally unfit for the work. Sir Alfred Lyall states that the French minister, when the Directors of the French Company asked the Crown for Lally's services, warned them in words that almost exactly feretold what subsequently ensued ; that ' he was a hot-headed, stiff-necked martinet, who would burst out into thunderous fury at the least check or blunder, and would made himself so generally detested, that his own officers would thwart him, trip him up, and foil all his operations for the satisfaction of ruining their general '. A worse agent, then, the French could hardly have chosen. It would have been a better policy had they rescued the chivalrous and high-minded Dupleix from the obscurity and poverty in which they had allowed him to languish ever since his recall, and placed him in command. But they had not either the foresight, or the magnanimity to perform such an act of reinstatement, when to do so would have been an acknowledgement that some one in the Government of France had blundered. And yet the name of Dupleix, whose prestige with the Indian princes had remained almost undimmed by his reverses, might well have been worth to them an army corps. Their choice of agents was bad enough, their procrastination was worse. The expedition determined on in 1755, did not start till 1756, and did not arrive off the coast of India till 1758. Whatever opportunity the French might have had of effecting their purpose was thus irretrievably lost. Some preliminary successes they did manage to achieve. But the French commander and his Army had eventually to surrender with the capture of Pondicheri by the English in January, 1761.

The final direct attempt made by France to oust the English from their possessions on the east coast of India was made in 1781, at a time when England was at war



both, not only all the chief maritime nations of Europe, but with her own American Colonies. Two of the ablest French commanders were in charge of the expedition; the military contingent under Bussy, a man far superior to Lally, both in military skill and in the difficult art of managing Orientals; the naval force under Suffren, the best admiral that France ever possessed, a man superior to the English commander, Sir Edward Hughes, as a naval tactician, but not his superior either in courage or in doggedness. Captain Mahan's description of the sea-battles between Suffren and Hughes is of extraordinary interest to Englishmen, Sir Alfred Lyall has noted, 'particularly because the author, though by no means a partisan of England, is stirred and warmed into reluctant admiration of the bull-dog tenacity with which the English captains fought their ships.' The attempt of 1781 failed, and one reason for its failure is given in a significant remark made by the historian, to the effect that 'the French admiral found on the Indian coast no friendly port or roadstead, no base of supplies or repair'.

Though this was the last organized attempt on the part of France on the possessions of England in India, there were not wanting signs that she had not entirely given up her plans for a restoration of her influence if only the opportunity presented itself. Even at the very time she was making this attempt, her agents were busy intriguing with the great Native Powers of Haidar Ali of Mysore, and the Mahrattas, with both of whom England was at the time engaged in a more or less desultory war, none the less difficult on that account.

Herein indeed was to be found the secret of the anxiety shown by the British Rulers of India with reference to French designs upon India, an anxiety that lasted till well into the early part of the nineteenth century, and which was destined to colour much of the foreign policy of the Governors-General of India in these earlier days of British rule. It is true that the British Rulers of India were freed from all serious rivalry for many a long year with any great European Power: but a new rivalry had begun, and the contest for political ascendancy was henceforth to be between the English and the great Native Powers. There were many distinguished Frenchmen in different



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

parts of India whom the great princes were only too glad to employ in their service to discipline their troops, and help them in their rivalry with other Powers. One of the most distinguished of these men was the illustrious de Boigne, who, it is of interest to note, was engaged by the famous Mahratta chieftain, Madhav Rao Scindia, or Madhoji, as he was commonly called, on the strength of an introduction from the first Governor-General in India, Warren Hastings, who was always an admirer of the great Mahratta, and was quite willing that Scindia should carve out a dominion for himself in Northern India, so long as he did not encroach on the British domains. De Boigne is said to have been worth to Scindia as much as 50,000 men. It was the work of such men as he that brought the Mahratta military power to the high state of efficiency it had reached, when it fell to the lot of the Marquess Wellesley to break it in that war which he is recorded to have placed among the glories of English military achievement in India, and in which Wellington and Lake won undying renown. As long as such men were to be found serving with the great Indian potentates, and were proving such efficient agents in helping them to become powerful military organizations, so long the British Rulers of India had grave cause for anxiety. And, as time went on, there were not wanting abundant proofs that this anxiety was fully justified. Thus Haidar Ali's son and successor, Tipu Sultan, rested his hopes of an ultimate Empire of Southern India, at the expense of the English, on French aid. It is recorded that his ambassadors were civilly welcomed at Paris by the French King, Louis XVI. In connexion with this incident, Sir Alfred Lyall has remarked : ' These most unsubstantial diplomatic amenities seem to have deluded him into a very false reckoning of his situation : but they confirmed the English in their attitude of vigilant suspicion, and in their determination to cut off such dangerous communications at the first opportunity.'

But the greatest menace to the English from the French came during the Napoleonic era. Napoleon conceived the plan of making himself master of India, as he was rapidly becoming the master of Europe. In him, indeed, revived the spirit of the dream of Dupleix. As early as 1799, he had written thus to Tipu Sultan : ' You have been



SL
already informed of my arrival on the shores of the Red Sea, with an innumerable and invincible Army, full of the desire of releasing you from the iron yoke of the English.' By the foresight of the Marquess Wellesley, a force was sent from India to Egypt, and assisted in destroying the French Army in Egypt, but Tipu had meanwhile been lured by the letter to his ruin. The failure of this earlier attempt on India did not deter Napoleon from his design. In 1802, it was discovered that a French squadron was preparing at Brest for the East Indies : it was the knowledge of this, and the discovery of an active correspondence between the Mahrattas and the French, that precipitated the great Mahratta campaign of 1803-5. Then in 1807 came the *rapprochement* between the French and Russian Emperors at Tilsit, when Napoleon is recorded to have 'incessantly pressed upon Alexander his grand scheme of a joint expedition through Turkey and Persia against the English in India, with the object of subverting their dominion, and destroying the sources of their commercial prosperity.' Nothing came directly from this proposal. But it was followed up not long afterwards by the dispatch of a French mission to Persia, and by increased activity on the part of French agents both at the Persian capital and at other Asiatic courts, who were all preparing the way, after their own peculiar fashion, for the furtherance of French designs. It was this that led Lord Minto to dispatch missions to form Treaties of alliance with the great Indian and Asiatic States of the Punjab, Sindh, Afghanistan, and Persia, with the view of checkmating these designs. Not till the final overthrow of Napoleon, did the fears of French aggression cease to operate as a factor in the external policy of the Governors-General of India. The tide of French aggression gradually receded, but it left still a few distinguished Frenchmen stranded in India, such as those who were afterwards in the service of the great Sikh Maharaja, Ranjit Singh, and who undoubtedly helped to make of the Sikh Khalsa the formidable fighting machine that Lord Hardinge, and after him Lord Dalhousie, found it.

France never came so near achieving a great dominion for herself in the East, at the expense of England, as during that period when her great representative, Dupleix,



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

was Director-General of her Indian possessions. Dupleix failed very largely from want of strength rather than from want of skill, and from want of continuous support from his Government. Sir Alfred Lyall has stated that a recent French writer has declared that, if Lally had thrown into the sea the instructions he had received in France, and had resumed the policy of Dupleix, he might have succeeded where Dupleix had failed, and the imperial diadem of India would not now be worn by the English Sovereign. But by the time Lally reached India, the position of the English in India had become much stronger than it had been at an earlier date, through the acquisition by Clive of the rich Province of Bengal by his great victory of Plassey, which had enabled him not only to drive the French out from that part of India, but to send strong reinforcements under able lieutenants to the possessions of the British in the Madras territory that were threatened by the French.

In a field, moreover, where a Dupleix had failed, it was not likely that a Lally would succeed. Various causes have been assigned for the failure of France. In the earlier days of the great struggle between England and France there appears to have been a want of co-operation between the French naval officers of whom Labourdonnais was the representative; and so convinced was the French Government of this at one time that, when Labourdonnais was recalled to France, he was thrown into the Bastille, only, however, after an imprisonment of three years in that grim fortress, to be honourably acquitted. Another cause that operated was undoubtedly the want of good military commanders to back up the plans carefully prepared by the skilful strategy of Dupleix. Bussy, indeed, was an able commander enough, but as Sir Alfred Lyall has shown, 'he was more intent, both under Dupleix and under Lally, on building up his own fortunes as a military dictator at Haidarabad, than on sharing the unprofitable hard-hitting struggle between the two Companies in the Karnatik.' The English were fortunate in having in their great military commanders, notably Clive and Lawrence, in the earlier part of the struggle, and Coote and Forde in the latter, men, who were not only the superiors of the majority of French commanders in military skill and dash, but in



patriotism. Self never entered into their calculations, but only their country. The great patriot of the French was Dupleix, but he was a strategist and not a commander, and he had to rely on lieutenants who, unfortunately, failed him in their hour of trial. His great opponent, Clive, was both a patriot and a great military commander, who, it has been said, only needed that success should be possible for him to succeed.

Such were some of the causes, but there were others far more potent than these in bringing the final issue about. One of these was the great inferiority of the French Government of the day to the English Government, which both English and French historians have noted. Sir Alfred Lyall has finely said, 'The whole unfettered energy of the free English people had been wielded by Pitt, the ablest war minister that England has ever seen, against the careless incapacity of courtiers, and the ill-supported efforts of one or two able officials under such an autocrat as Louis XV. Nor will it be denied that French writers are mainly right in ascribing the success of England at this period in India and elsewhere to this signal inequality between the two Governments.' A French historian has said: 'England conquered solely by the superiority of her Government.' And in no respect was this superiority better shown than in the relative importance attached by the two Governments to sea-power. It has been recorded that the French King so little realized the necessity of command of the seas, if a great over-sea dominion was to be set up or maintained, that he is said to have replied to the Duc de Choiseul who was pressing him about the state of the Navy, in these terms: 'My dear Choiseul, you are as foolish as ever your predecessors were: they have told me that they wished for a Navy: there will never be any other Navies in France than those of the painter Vernet.' In the naval superiority of the English then must be sought the final cause of the failure of France. Sir Alfred Lyall has written: 'When the Seven Years' War began in 1756, the French did make a vigorous attempt to regain command of the waterways: and it must be clear that to their failure in that direct trial of naval strength, far more than to their abandonment of the policy of Dupleix, must be attributed the eventual dis-



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

appearance of their prospects of establishing a permanent ascendancy in India. The lesson thus taught to the nations is the value of a command of the sea: it is this that has enabled England not only to found, but also to maintain her great Ocean Empire. It was this that enabled her to pour in her troops into South Africa and prevent her supremacy on that Continent being wrested from her in these latter days. First of Oriental nations, Japan has not been slow to follow the example thus set by England, and with triumphant success; and thus has been seen that marvellous transformation: a country that only entered the comity of nations in the middle of the nineteenth century, now at the beginning of the twentieth century a world power to be reckoned with by all the great Powers of the Western World. Another of these Western Powers is now entering the arena for competition in the, at present, peaceful struggle for the supremacy of the sea, and the final issue is 'on the knees of the Gods'.

Dupleix, as Sir Alfred Lyall has well said, stands forth as 'the most striking figure in the short Indian episode of that long and arduous contest for transmarine dominion which was fought out between France and England in the eighteenth century'. As a great Ruler, he is well worthy of a place in the front rank of Rulers of India, and to take his place side by side with the great British Governors-General. One characteristic especially he possessed which has generally been considered to be the inalienable birthright of the Englishman. This was doggedness and tenacity of purpose. His persistence and determination were proof against every misfortune, and he ever refused to acknowledge himself beaten.

One of Dupleix's most marked characteristics was his magnanimity: never was this trait displayed to better effect than on the occasion when the new Governor who had been sent by the French Government to supersede him, was installed in office. It is recorded that, when the Proclamation announcing the appointment of the new Governor had been read, Dupleix was the first to call out, '*Vive le Roi! Long live the King!*' Equanimity was another of his great characteristics, and was shown in the manner in which he bore his misfortunes when, after his recall to France, he fell on evil days. He had uttered



SL

his last remonstrance at his unjust treatment in these terms : ' I have sacrificed my youth, my fortune, my life, to enrich my nation in Asia : my services are treated as idle tales : my demand is denounced as ridiculous : I am treated as the vilest of mankind : and am left to die in most deplorable poverty.' But when his remonstrances remained unheeded, his equanimity did not desert him, and when he eventually passed away in poverty and neglect, he did so with that dignity which was of the very essence of his high character.

Dupleix achieved remarkable popularity not only with the princes of India, but also with the subject peoples, and won an affection which many an Englishman would have done much to gain. One illustration of this was given on the occasion of his final departure from the shores of India. He was leaving, it must be remembered, under a cloud, under the displeasure of the Government of France, and with the thinly-veiled hostility of the new Governor to contend against : yet it has been recorded that all the principal officers, all the servants and all the common people of Pondicheri followed him to the place of embarkation, and expressed their grief and their regret at his departure. Frenchmen, it has been observed, sometimes attain a popularity among their subject races that it is not given to the average Englishman to gain. No one could have travelled through Egypt with his eyes open, during the days of Anglo-French control, without observing the different degrees of popularity as between the Frenchman and the Englishman with the subject races, that existed in the Egypt of those days.

The reason is not far to seek, and will not be found to be altogether discreditable to the Englishman. A slight Oriental tinge in the volatile temperament of the Frenchman enables him to adapt himself more easily and with less friction than the Englishman to his environment, and he will generally be found to be more tolerant of the moral weaknesses and failings of subject races than is the Englishman. There never was any doubt about Dupleix's popularity. He possessed one Oriental weakness, that of a love of ostentatious display, which has always appealed to the imagination of the Oriental. The special form this took with him was the setting up of a pillar of



RULERS OF INDIA

CSL

victory after one of his triumphs, and the building of a town on its site, which he called Dupleix-Fath-abad, 'The Town of the Victory of Dupleix.' This was a harmless enough weakness, and one after all that he possessed in common with many other distinguished Rulers of India. But another weakness there also was in his great character which was not of so harmless a nature, and this was his love of dealing with Orientals after an Oriental manner, and of encountering Oriental astuteness and duplicity with the same weapons. However, these perhaps natural weaknesses in a man of his temperament need not detract from his great character. He will still remain one of the greatest Frenchmen of his time, and indeed of all time. He strove gallantly to win but failed; failure in his case was no disgrace. In his dreams of Empire, his country had always held the first place. And though his ungrateful country failed to recognize his merits while he was alive, history has accorded him a place in the front rank of heroes: and he will ever live in the minds of his countrymen as a great patriot, and a born Ruler; and in the memory of Englishmen as a gallant adversary whom Fortune would not allow to win the game in which the stakes were no less than a great Asiatic Empire. Colonel Malleon has well said: 'Even the rivals who profited by his recall place him on a pedestal scarcely, if at all, lower than the pedestals upon which stand Clive, Warren Hastings, and Wellesley. In grandeur of conception, and in the wide scope of his projects of Empire, he was their forerunner—unconsciously on their part, perhaps, their inspirer.'

27920

150B